

R E R M O N

Subject

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THOMAS GIBBONS

S E R M O N S

CHURCH OF B L E

V A R I O U S S E R M O N S

S E R M O N S

H Y M N S

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TO THE
CHURCH OF CHRIST,

ASSEMBLING AT

HABERDASHERS-HALL, LONDON.

My Christian Friends, and Beloved in the LORD,

EIGHTEEN years and upwards are expired since I entred upon the pastoral office among you: and I account it a very eminent mercy of my life, that, after such a long and near connexion, we are in the enjoyment of undisturbed harmony, and the sincerest affection and friendship.

PEACE, as it is the offspring, so it is the guardian of Piety. If we would therefore hope that true godliness should thrive and flourish among us, let us be ever solicitous that peace may still diffuse its influences, that, as plants and trees under the balmy blessing of a soft and warm air, and the copious descent of gentle rains and dews, we may be hastening our preparation for the regions of perfect holiness, and everlasting amity and joy.

You are here presented, my dear Friends, with a volume of my Sermons. As they have already been yours from the pulpit, so to you they are inscribed from the press. If any of them have been honoured in any degree to promote the divine life in your souls at the House of God, may they have a double honour put upon them, and aid the worship of the family, or your seasons of devout retirement! That a divine blessing may accompany my Discourses into your own houses, is my most sincere and ardent prayer to that God, who, while his servants "plant and water," alone "can give the increase*."

I AM not so vain as to imagine that my compositions can furnish any new discoveries, or that there are not Sermons already extant much superior to my own; but yet possibly even these my feeble Effays, as I am certain they contain very important and interesting truths, and are calculated not to amuse the fancy, but I trust to impress and warm the heart, may yield some benefit to you in your pursuit and progress of holiness, as you know that they come from a Pastor who most cordially

* 1 Cor. iii. 6.

DEDICATION.

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dially loves you; and who, from the experience of your abundant demonstrations of kindness, is certain that he is beloved by you. Your distinguished affection to the Minister who now speaks to you from the press, may be accompanied with a peculiar regard to his Discourses, so far as they appear to you to agree with the Oracles of infallible truth; especially if he should (and how tender is the thread of life!) be soon removed from you, and you should shortly hear his voice no more.

MAY I ever speak and write, and may you ever hear and read, as in the view of eternity! that eternity that has gathered to itself nearly, if not quite two thirds of the persons who signed my Call, and whose ever-open gates are as ready to receive our souls, as they have done the many that have gone before us. Blessed be God, that though such a great number of the church, in comparison with the whole, has been taken away since my ministry among you, that he has repaired our breaches; and that in the room of those of our company who have fallen by death, there have been so many young persons, more especially, who I trust as “volun-

"taries * in the day of CHRIST's power," have joined themselves first to the LORD, and then to our church. May every addition to us be an addition of a soul that shall be saved; "and
 "may we, walking in the fear of the LORD,
 "and the comfort of the HOLY GHOST, be
 "edified and multiplied †."

You will find, my Friends, so many practical exhortations in the volume of Discourses I am now putting into your hands, that I shall spare enlargements of this kind in my present address. Only let me exhort you to pray for me, and indeed for yourselves at the same time, that my heart may never want a divine coal from the altar of that God whom I serve, that so there may not be one sabbath or ordinance in which I am the Leader of your devotions, when you may not witness the communication of a divine flame to your own souls. I hope on my part I shall never cease to intreat, with the collected ardor and importunity

* I here refer to *Psalms* cx. 3. where it is said according to our translation, *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. Populus tuus liberalitates*, says Bythner, i.e. *spontaneus, ultro se offerens*. The learned Ainsworth renders the passage, *Thy people shall be voluntaries*; and in his Annotations on the place adds, *a people of voluntarinesses, or of liberalities, that is, they shall most freely, willingly, and liberally present themselves and their oblations to thee*.

† Acts ix. 31.

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nity of my spirit, that the FATHER of Lights and Mercies and the GOD of all Power and Consolations will sanctify, establish, and refresh you with the daily influences of his grace. And O! that he would most mercifully grant, that as, I trust, our church is a nursery for heaven, so our families may be nurseries for the church! Thus shall neither parents nor children be consumed in the curse of thorns and briars; but “instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree; and they shall be unto the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off *.”

My heart dictates to my pen while I subscribe myself, my christian Friends,

Your most affectionate servant

Hoxton-square,
March 30, 1762.

in the gospel of our LORD,

Thomas Gibbons.

* Isaiah lv. 13.

P R E F A C E.

TO preach grace practically, and duty evangelically, according to the example of the apostles and first ministers of the Word, is, I trust, my governing aim in all my ministrations: and perhaps there is scarcely a Sermon I ever delivered, but what has contained an union of privilege and precept, of faith and practice.

According to this model are formed the Discourses here offered to the public view; and whoever peruses them, will find that I have neither omitted the great and glorious doctrines of Christianity, nor been negligent in the improvement of them for the most valuable important purposes of an holy temper and conduct in the hearts and lives of their professors. Faith as the seed, and holiness as the fruit, I find united in the sacred writings; and a prevailing regard to both, will, I think, evidently appear through the several pages of this volume.

A critical eye may possibly discover several blunders and inaccuracies as to language and composition. I own my great and various work is no sufficient apology for them; but may it not at least afford me a plea for the candor and favourable allowances of the learned and judicious reader?

A sincere design to adapt my Discourses for real and substantial usefulness, or for illumination, conviction,

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viction, establishment, and comfort in the paths of piety and virtue, has, I trust, accompanied me from Sermon to Sermon, perhaps I might say from page to page: and if the following sheets are calculated to do good to souls, whether saints or sinners, let not my reader be disgusted if he should trace in them no other merit. I desire him beforehand not to expect from me the riches of a WATTS, the elegance of a GROSVENOR, the sagacity of a GUYSE, the beauties of an HERVEY, or the sublimity of a DAVIES *.

One thing I may venture to say, as I am sure I speak it with the sincerest truth, that there is not a subject here treated on, which I would not have applied to myself, and experienced upon my own heart. I pray for myself as well as for my readers, when I pray, as I cordially do, That our hearts may be withdrawn from the creature, and centred upon GOD—That we may consider, and behave ourselves as mortals and immortals—That we may powerfully believe, and constantly prepare for the coming of our LORD—That ministers and people may be partakers in the special favour of

* The person here referred to is the late Mr Samuel Davies, late President of the college in New Jersey; a preacher and writer most remarkable for the energy and grandeur, as well as the spirituality of his compositions. I have been waiting for some time for his manuscripts from America, from which, I hope, according to his desire signified to me some time before his death, to collect and publish a volume or volumes of his Discourses, which will abundantly justify the character I have here given of this truly great and good man.

of heaven— That we may be perfect in our measure, as our FATHER which is in heaven is perfect— That we may glory only in the cross of CHRIST— That we may fear the LORD all our days— That we may be ready for death and heaven— And that we may have a copious effusion of that “ wisdom which comes from
“ above, and is first pure, then peaceable, gentle,
“ easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good
“ fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy..” *Amen, and Amen!*

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ERRATA.

Page 9. line 20. leave out *and*. P. 47. l. 15. read *proportions*. P. 118. l. 29. after *or* add *must it be*. P. 174. l. 27. after *world* read *of*. P. 381. read *roar*.



S E R M O N I*.

Hope withdrawn from the Creature and
centred on G O D.



P S A L M XXXIX. 7.

*And now, LORD, what wait I for ! My hope
is in thee.*

THIS Psalm, ascribed in the title of it to *David*, is a Psalm that discovers a deep and affecting view of the vanity of human life, and the insufficiency of this world to give rest and satisfaction to the spirit. A truth indeed frequently and universally confessed, and that will sooner or later be felt by all ; for tho' it may for a time only be the talk of the lips,
-B yet

* Preached November 9. 1760. on occasion of the Death of his late Majesty.

yet it will one day, in the day of death at farthest, (but may it be much sooner to us!) become the intimate and overpowering sense and experience of the heart. "LORD, make me," says the holy man, "to know my end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am (a)." *David* well knew from observation and the history of mankind what was the usual term of human life, and he well knew that he could not expect to be privileged above the common lot, or to have the established laws of heaven cancelled that he might draw out his thread to a longer duration than what was indulged to his fellow-creatures and fellow-sinners, and therefore he could not desire to be informed from above of what were to be his general expectations as to life, since they were such as were common to him as well as others: nor does the *royal Psalmist*, as I apprehend, design, by his beseeching God "that he may know his end, and the measure of his days, what it is," that he would have God acquaint him with the exact number of his days, or tell him at what particular period or hour his death was to arrive: this intelligence is promised to none of mortal race, nor is there any hint from God that such a knowledge will be vouchsafed upon any occasion, and therefore it were folly in any (and why should we impute this folly to the man after God's own heart, the inspired Prophet and

(a) Verse 4.

and Psalmist of *Israel*?) to ask of G O D such an information as he had not given the least ground for any one person among the sons and daughters of *Adam* ever to expect? This would be praying for a thing of nought; and prayer would in this case not be the prayer of faith, since it would have no promise nor any rational hope upon which to plead, but on the other hand, would be the prayer of enthusiasm, and absolutely impertinent and unprofitable vanity. But the intention of *David's* request, "that he might be taught his end, and the measure of his days, and that he might know how frail he was," seems rather to be this; that G O D would so powerfully impress his heart with such a sense of the shortness of life, and the speedy dissolution of his earthly tabernacle, as that he might ever keep his end in view, and might have his temper and conduct in correspondence to such a sense intirely and happily formed and regulated. According to what *Moses* prays in a Psalm of like import with this before us; "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom (b)."

It is one thing to have the simple apprehension of a truth, and another thing to have such a living, impressive, abiding, and transforming influence of it upon our souls, as to beget in us that disposition, and excite us to that behaviour, which the nature, design, and end of that truth,

B 2

whatever

(b) Psalm xc. 12.

whatever it is, are adapted to produce in our hearts and lives. And in this matter we may rationally and wisely call in the aids of divine power and grace, that GOD would write upon our hearts, and cause to live, as it were, in our practice, those truths which cannot but be obvious to us, and which in a manner compel the assent of our minds.

The Psalmist proceeds, "Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand's-breadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee; verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity(c). Thou hast made my days as an hand's-breadth," a little space, a scanty allotment of time; "and mine age, before thee," to thine all-comprehending eye, that eye which looks at once thro' immense duration, "is as nothing;" it vanishes, it is lost in thine infinite survey.

And certain it is, it is a truth that cannot be denied or doubted, that "every man in his best estate," in the fullest enjoyment of health, and in the most dazzling pomp of riches and honours, "is altogether," in every view of him, "Vanity;" and may be well reckoned no more than a splendid cipher, a mere shadow and phantom that may justly pass for nothing.

"Surely every man walks in a vain show! surely they are disquieted in vain! he heaps up riches, and knows not who shall gather them (d)." In whatever state and majesty man may appear, and however great and glorious

(c) Verse 5.

(d) Verse 6.

rious he may be in his own opinion, and the opinion of others, yet he "walks but in a vain show," in an imagination, a fancy, a dream, an unsubstantial and airy illusion; and therefore his disquietude about this world's favour and enjoyments are vain; and when he has with much solicitude and labour piled up wealth, he cannot tell who shall reap what he has sown, and gather the produce of, it may be, his whole life's painful anxiety and indefatigable toil.

In this connection come in the words of our text: "And now, LORD, what wait I for! "My hope is in thee." 'And now, as the result of all, what shall I wait for from this vain life, and its vainer scenes? What can I reasonably look for from them? How is it possible that such broken reeds, and broken cisterns, can either support or supply me? Withdrawing myself from the creature, and no longer expecting my rest and happiness from it, I fly to thee, my G O D, and all my hopes fix and centre in thee as my portion.' "My expectation itself is in thee," says the version in the *Polyglott*, and indeed quite agreeable to the original *; that is, 'The very strength, the ardor, the very soul, as it were, of my expectation is in thee.'

Another translator renders the passage, "My hope itself is given to thee †;" as if the

B 3

Psalmist

* תוֹחֵלְתִּי לָךְ ה'נָּא *Expectatio mea in te ipsa.*

† *Spes mea tibi data est.* SCHMIDTUS.

6 *Hope withdrawn from the creature* Sermon. I.

Psalmist had said, ‘ The highest proof of my
 ‘ esteem, MY HOPE, is given to thee, remov-
 ‘ ed from the creature, and placed upon thy-
 ‘ self.’ The *Septuagint* translate the verse, “ And
 “ now where is my expectation? Is it not the
 “ LORD? And my substance is with thee *.”
 What might be called the Psalmist’s substance,
 his principal, his essential part, this was given
 to GOD, and only a kind of circumstantial
 superficial regard remained for the creature :
 GOD had his heart, his substance, and all be-
 sides him or short of his GOD, had only a
 slighter, and by much an inferior concern and
 interest with the Psalmist.

And now, my friends, let me briefly show
 you, and the rather as GOD has written the
 vanity of life and its glories in the ashes of our
 late Sovereign,

- I. That there is nothing in this world worthy
 the expectation of our souls as their hap-
 piness. And,
- II. That our *Hope* should be placed intirely
 upon GOD, as the author of our felicity.

I. I shall show you, that there is nothing in
 this world worthy the expectation of our souls,
 as our happiness. “ And now, LORD, what
 “ wait I for ?” It is as much as to say, that
 he waited for nothing; or that at least it was
 the conviction and sense of his soul, that he
 ought

* Καὶ νῦν τίς ἡ ὑπομονή μου ; ἐχὼ δὲ Κύριον καὶ ἡ ὑπόστασίς μου παρὰ
 σοὶ ἐστίν.

ought to wait for nothing, that is, nothing from this world, nothing from the creature, nothing short of his GOD for his happiness. — Such vanity and emptiness did the Psalmist find in all things here! And one or two considerations will quickly satisfy us that the case is as the Psalmist has represented it, and that this world is not worthy of the expectation of our souls, as the seat or the source of their happiness.

1. All things here are uncertain. Look round the world and see how uncertain all its enjoyments are. They are uncertain as to their attainment; for how many persons are toiling all their days after Riches and Honours, and never are able to reach them, but die disappointed in the pursuit? They make themselves miserable all the days of their lives, in order to make themselves happy, and still the dear idol of their hearts flies farther and farther from them, and they never have reached the object of their wishes and labour, when Death sweeps the sudden net over them, and in a moment all their thoughts perish.

But suppose that we obtain what our souls seek after; still does not uncertainty, faithful as the shadow to our bodies, attend us? How often do Riches pass away from their owners without any warning! “They make themselves wings;” and more especially, it may be, if they are not properly checked and pruned by liberality, and kind communications of

a part of them to our indigent and distressed fellow-creatures and fellow-christians; “and “flee away as an eagle towards heaven (e).” Many from a fulness of wealth have suddenly sunk into the most abject poverty, and been the objects of that compassion, which they have inhumanly as well as unchristianly refused to others, when it was in the power of their hands to administer to their necessities.

As to Honour among men, how treacherous and fugitive! Many have suddenly fallen from the very pinnacle of state, into the foulest disgrace and most miserable contempt! Praise has been often found to be but a wind that passes away, and comes not again; and that very breath that has blown up a bubble, with our glories glittering upon it, has been as ready upon some unexpected turn to dissolve it. The world is like the inconstant sea, and its fullest tides are sometimes followed with the lowest ebbs. *Job* stands upon sacred record as a proof of the uncertainty of worldly possessions and enjoyments. Though he was the greatest of all the men in the *East*, and abounded in every thing which this world could afford to make him easy and happy, yet his possessions were taken from him by the unrighteous violence of men, or consumed by fire from heaven; his children were killed by a sudden hurricane; his body was smitten with sore biles, and the very companion of his life proved a snare, and would have proved a curse to him (f). What

(e) Prov. xxiii. 5.

(f) Job i.

What an instance was here of the vicissitude of human things? And can we, while we read the history of *Job's* sudden reverse of circumstances, help remembering what the wise man says, "Labour not to be rich; cease from thine own understanding; wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not (g)?" And how just and suitable was the reflection of *Job* upon his own condition? "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither (h)."

View but the world a little, and you will see from thence how uncertain all its enjoyments are. Perhaps some of us have experienced how false and treacherous it proves to our grasp, notwithstanding we thought that we had a sure hold of it, and that it never would fail us. What think we of the plunder and desolations of outrageous and lawless armies, of overwhelming inundations, engulphing seas, and devouring fires, boisterous winds, that are able to level all before them, if heaven should let loose their fury upon towns and cities? And what think we of the havock of earthquakes, that in one hour, nay in a few minutes, shall turn populous and splendid cities into a ruinous heap, and bury the treasures of gold and silver, together with their possessors, in the bowels of that earth from whence they were taken? This you know was the case not many years since with the city of *Lisbon*.

And

(g) Prov. xxiii. 4, 5.

(h) Job i. 21.

And besides these more dreadful methods of destroying our substance, there are others that are common among mankind, such as a blast upon our trade; the wickedness and over-reaching of our neighbours, if not our designed enemies; the sudden changes in the humours of mankind; or a wanton and thoughtless expence, which often attends those who have large possessions in the world; so that though their nest is deep and wide, yet the wings of their luxury and pride outgrow it, and turn their affluence in a few years into want and beggary. Compare the world to a sea, and the human race to merchants or mariners upon it, and you will see many ways how their vessels may be bulged and lost, and a few years will count up many wrecks, even among our neighbours and acquaintance.

Upon the whole, what uncertainty in all things here! The root of all worldly enjoyments is as rottenness, and its blossom goes up as the dust, and in an hour when we least expected it, a sudden alteration may take place, and end the labours and treasures of whole years in disappointment and ruin.

2. All things here are unsatisfying. See the rich worldling. He has gathered and heaped up much, but is he at rest? Is he not still crying out, *Give, Give?* The more he has the more does he seem to crave; and amidst his abundance, through his dissatisfaction, he is still in want. Turn your eyes to the ambitious man. He has climbed

climbed very high, and is hung round with many honourable titles, but is he at rest? Is he not impatient and discontented till he mount to an higher, and yet higher step in the scale of human glory? And was he even master of the world, would he not sigh and mourn amidst all his proud acquisitions, and say, *It is not enough?* Or shall we consider the voluptuous sensualist, the man of pleasure, as the world calls him, he who makes his belly his God, or who is resolved to “walk in the ways of his heart and in the sight of his eyes,” and is determined to deny himself nothing that may administer fuel to his inordinate appetites and raging and ungoverned passions. Is he satisfied? Why then is he upon the perpetual career after pleasure? If there is happiness in this or the other object of his desire, why is it forsaken almost as soon as tasted, and why is invention racked and time murdered to seek out and provide for himself still new gratifications? At best this happiness is but a mere roving from one earthly sweet to another; and surely the pains that are taken, and the anxious thoughts that are employed to find out and attain still new delights, cannot have any pretences to the appellation of felicity!

But let it be admitted that there may be satisfaction in the riches, honours, and pleasures of life, yet must it not be with this addition, that they may be enjoyed without any interruption or end? But alas! this is not the case.

In

In the midst of our riches, our honours, or our pleasures, if the dark thought enters the mind, 'that I must shortly die, and that I may even die now, and this night leave them all behind me;' where is the satisfaction of mind?

The sweeter our enjoyments, the more our hearts rest or seem to rest and rejoice in them, the more terrible will be the apprehension that we must soon, and we know not how soon, part with them, and that they will shortly be no more to us than the beauties, pastimes, and pleasures of his native country will be to that malefactor, who is ordered for transportation for life into a far country, who is forbid to carry any thing of all he has enjoyed along with him, and who knows not how soon he may be commanded and forced to embark and leave all behind him.

In the day of death what will the world be to us? Then then it will be found indeed quite unsatisfying. Our LORD strongly and awfully portrays and exposes the folly of counting upon happiness in worldly enjoyments: "And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully, and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do because I have no room where to bestow my fruits and my goods? And he said this will I do, I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits, and my goods; and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink,

“ drink, and be merry: but GOD said unto
 “ him, Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be
 “ required of thee, then whose shall all those
 “ things be which thou hast provided? So is
 “ he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is
 “ not rich towards GOD (g).” ‘What is,’ says
 a nervous writer *, ‘all created perfection to a
 ‘ dying body and departing spirit? What friend,
 ‘ what possession, what accomplishment, will
 ‘ then revive our fainting spirit, or strengthen
 ‘ our dying hearts? To which of his earthly
 ‘ comforts will a man then turn, or can they
 ‘ all together minister any proper cordial to ex-
 ‘ piring nature? What impression would the
 ‘ most beautiful object make on an eye that is
 ‘ languishing and ready to be fixed in death?
 ‘ What strength could the most fine gold give
 ‘ to a pale and trembling hand, all covered
 ‘ over with mortal dew? Or what consolation
 ‘ would ever such a confluence of worldly
 ‘ things administer to a sinking, dying heart?
 ‘ Can these things comfort us on our dying beds,
 ‘ or stand by us in our last extremity? It is well
 ‘ if they do not rather add to our affliction,
 ‘ and increase the bitterness of death.’

Solomon, whose power and possessions could
 enable him to try and taste every earthly good,
 and search and determine whether satisfaction
 was to be found in it, and who accordingly
 did make the experiment, tells us (b), after he
 had

* Barker's Sermon on the death of the Rev. Mr Samuel Newman,
 Page 12. (g) Luke xii. 16—22. (b) Ecclef. ii. 10.

had informed us, "That whatsoever his eyes
 "desired he kept not from them, that he with-
 "held not his heart from any joy, that he
 "looked on all the works his hands had
 "wrought, and on the labour that he had la-
 "boured to do, and behold, all was vanity and
 "vexation of spirit; and that there was no pro-
 "fit under the sun." All was *vanity* as to any
 substantial, satisfying good as a portion; and
 not only was it empty of good, but it was filled
 with real misery, and to *vanity* was added *vex-*
ation of spirit. The active noble intellect of man,
 the rational immortal spirit, the offspring and
 the likeness of God, cannot be satisfied with
 earthly, fading, and fleeting enjoyments as its
 portion. As well might you expect to satisfy an
 hungry stomach with chaff, or a parching thirst
 with the mire of the streets, as confer happiness
 on the soul by the accumulation and abundance
 of worldly wealth and enjoyment. The soul in-
 deed may for a while fancy itself to be happy in
 the honours, riches, and pleasures of this world;
 but it is cheated with an airy dream, which
 death will dissolve, if it is not (as this is not un-
 likely) dissolved long before, and then shall the
 wretched spirit, awakened to a just sense of
 things, "be as when a hungry man dreams,
 "and behold he eats, but he awakes, and his
 "soul is empty; or as when a thirsty man
 "dreams, and behold he drinks, but he awakes,
 "and behold he is faint, and his soul hath ap-
 "petite (i)."

With

(i) Isaiah xxix. 8.

With how much reason then did the Psalmist cry out, "And now, LORD, what wait I for!" And how certain is it that there is nothing in this world worthy the expectation of our souls as their portion! I come,

II. To show that our Hope should be placed intirely upon God, as the author of our felicity. "And now, LORD, what wait I for! My Hope is in thee." As if the royal Psalmist had said, ' Since man, and man at his best estate, is altogether vanity, since there is nothing in these lower regions that can satisfy my soul, since happiness is not to be found in the land of the living, since the depth saith, It is not in me, and the sea says, It is not in me, since it cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof, what is there, O LORD, that, as a reasonable creature and a creature enlightened to look through this world and discover its emptiness, what is there that I should wait for? My views and hopes to this world let them be all extinguished. Henceforth let my heart be dead to all things here, as I am certain they are themselves no better than death, however finely coloured and disguised. Having thus withdrawn my expectations from the creature, I transfer them, I direct them, I centre them, O LORD, wholly upon thee; I place my hope where only I am sure it cannot be disappointed, upon thine eternal and unchangeable self; who, as thou art

‘ art the fountain of my being, art the alone
 ‘ giver of my happiness; in whom are all my
 ‘ springs both of present comfort and final fel-
 ‘ licity.’

In such a view we may consider the meaning of *David*, and such should be the language of all. And in order to justify this temper and conduct of *David*’s, his renunciation of the world as his happiness, and his choice of God as his portion, let us consider,

1. That there is enough in God to fill our most enlarged expectations, and to consummate our happiness. What is God? Nothing less than an infinite, eternal, uncreated, and unchangeable Being. In wisdom unsearchable, in power almighty, in truth inviolable, in holiness absolute and indefectible, and in goodness supreme, sovereign, and boundless. He is the original, preserver, proprietor, ruler, and end of the whole universe of Beings. Creation, all creation is his, and hangs in all the links of its amazing chain in dependence upon his power and pleasure. He derives from none, he is obliged to none, he relies upon none; but all things derive from him, are obliged to him, and rest upon him. “In him we live, and
 “ move, and have our Being (*k*). And of him,
 “ and to him, and through him, are all things;
 “ to whom be glory for ever (*l*).” He is an ocean whose streams can never fail, whose depths can never be sounded, and whose extent
 can

(*k*) Acts xvii. 28.

(*l*) Rom. xi. 36.

can never be comprehended by his creatures. Collect all perfections together, and enhance them with the wonderful epithets of *Infinite*, *Eternal*, and *Unchangeable*, and yet you have not said too high, or ascribed too much to G O D. His names are great, ineffably great and glorious, such particularly are those of JEHOVAH and I A M, or I A M THAT I A M (*m*); which may denote his boundless, independent, and undecaying existence, and may shew how much he can and will perform for his people; and particularly it is as if he had set his hand to a blank, when he revealed himself by the name I A M, to be filled up by his people with whatever is good and gracious, or great or glorious: as if he had said, 'I A M Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Justice, Goodness, Truth, Eminency, Supereminency, Perfection, Eternity, Immensity; I A M all that can be expressed or conceived, and all that you can join of glory or excellence to my name I A M, that, I say, I A M; without hyperbole, without any possible danger of excess in your ascriptions of attributes to me, or of your apprehensions concerning me*.'

Is not here then enough for our happiness? Be our desires never so vast, G O D can fill them from his immeasurable fulness; be our souls never so permanent, though an eternity lies before them, and they have the stamp of immortality upon them, G O D is commensurate to
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(*m*) Exod. iii. 14.

* See Bishop Beveridge's Works, Vol. II. Sermon 1.

their existence, and can make them happy through boundless duration. Do we want pardon? God can "blot out our iniquities as a cloud, and as a thick cloud all our sins;" and "as far as the east is from the west, so far he can remove our transgressions from us." It is God that we have offended by our sins, to his bar we are responsible, his curse we have deserved, and he can by one act of grace dissolve all our obligations to punishment, save us from the gulph of hell, and receive our souls to everlasting salvation in the bonds of his covenant, which is "everlasting, ordered in all things and sure." Again, do we want sanctification? He by his Spirit can rectify all the disorders of our souls, purge us from all our iniquities, form us into his own likeness, make us his willing and faithful subjects here, and prepare us for the enjoyment of himself in his own immediate presence and beatific vision and glory. Do we want sure and permanent peace and strong consolation? One smile of his amiable countenance, whose brightness makes heaven to be heaven, can scatter all our doubts and fears, and one word, one whisper of love from him, can hush the tempest and terrors of our souls into peace, and fill us "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Do we want after this mortal life is over an happiness that shall run parallel with infinite duration? God can give us an abundant entrance into his everlasting kingdom; he can show to us the path of life, when rising from our passage through

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“ the valley of the shadow of death,” and bring us into “ his presence, where there is fulness of joy, and to his right hand, where are pleasures for evermore.” Think, think, O man, whether there is a want that thy soul actually feels, or may possibly feel, but what thy God can supply. Nature, Grace, and Glory are his, and he is LORD over all. Dost thou need *Wisdom*? He has *Wisdom* to be thy guide and counsellor. Dost thou need *Strength*? He is almighty and can uphold thee. Dost thou need *Protection* against thine enemies? His omnipotence holds all thine enemies in his chain, and can blast and destroy all their power. Dost thou need *Holiness*? He is the Father of lights, and one ray from him can clothe thee with his own image. Dost thou need *Security*? He is “ the same yesterday, to day, “ and for ever; and he is faithful who hath “ promised.” Dost thou want *Happiness*? His name is *Love*. Dost thou want much to constitute that *Happiness*? That love is inexhaustible. Dost thou want an *eternal Happiness*? His years can never fail, and his love has no limits, either as to measure or duration. Can *Omnipotence* secure you? He is all treasures. Can unfearchable *Riches* suffice you? He is all fulness. Can *All* content you? Can *Infinity* fill you? See then all this in your God.

But here may arise a Query; ‘ Though there is enough in God for our happiness, yet “ will “ he in very deed dwell with men upon earth?

“ and will he be to them a GOD, and shall
 “ they be to him a people?” ‘ The fountain is
 ‘ full, but is it not sealed? Or will its com-
 ‘ munications of blessing be made to our apo-
 ‘ state and rebellious world? We have sinned,
 ‘ and hereby provoked GOD to anger, and he
 ‘ is a great Majesty, and “ a jealous GOD, of
 “ purer eyes than to behold iniquity, neither
 “ shall sinners dwell in his sight;” will he then
 ‘ admit of our access to him? Or have we any
 ‘ sufficient reason to think that he will be mer-
 ‘ ciful unto us, that he will receive us graci-
 ‘ ously, and love us freely, and that he will
 ‘ grant that happiness to us which only can be
 ‘ found in him, but which still may be denied
 ‘ to such ill and hell-deserving creatures, who
 ‘ have rendered ourselves so odious to his ho-
 ‘ linefs, and so obnoxious to his justice? What
 ‘ and if he is so offended, (and why should he
 ‘ not honour his own laws, and support the
 ‘ glories of his government?) as to cast us at
 ‘ an eternal distance from himself, and rather
 ‘ make us the monuments of his righteous in-
 ‘ dignation against sin, than the objects of his
 ‘ favour and mercy? If this should be the case
 ‘ we are as far from happiness as ever.’

In answer to such a Query as this, let me add,
 (2.) That as there is enough in GOD to fill our
 most enlarged expectations, and to consummate
 our felicity, so GOD is willing to grant us all
 that happiness which we can possibly desire in
 him and from him. We have offended, and
 greatly

greatly offended. We have much guilt to charge upon ourselves, and "GOD is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things;" knows all our sinfulness; and there is not one evil action, or word, or thought that has escaped his notice; but still our GOD (how wonderful his grace!) is not inflexible in his purposes of vengeance against us. He has sent us his Word, a word of life, and hope, and salvation. It is enriched with exceeding great and precious promises, and all to assure us that he is a GOD that will not only forgive, but likewise accept and bless, even unto eternal life, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. He has proclaimed his name, "THE LORD, THE LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin (n). Come now," says the LORD, "and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool (o). GOD has so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes upon him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For GOD sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved (p). For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, that GOD has done in sending his own Son in

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(n) Exod. xxxiv. 6.

(o) Isai. i. 18.

(p) John iii. 16.

22 *Help withdrawn from the creature* Sermon. I.

“ the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (g). CHRIST was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of GOD in him (r).”

GOD is seated, not on a throne of vengeance, but on a throne of grace, and in the name of JESUS we may “ draw nigh to this throne with boldness, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (s).” As there is a perfect all-sufficiency in GOD to satisfy all the wants of our spirits, so he is willing, as far as we can desire it, and as he can impart it, to vouchsafe it to us. “ Grace reigns,” reigns not only so as to extinguish the curse, but reigns “ unto eternal life through JESUS CHRIST our LORD (t).” What declarations of free pardon, what tender exhortations with perverse and rebellious sinners, what melting invitations of mercy, what full and ample promises, what warm and condescending intreaties, what examples of rich and extensive salvation to the very chief of criminals, are recorded in the divine word? And what are these but so many proofs that GOD indeed is willing to be “ our GOD, our Father, our friend, and everlasting portion?” Hast thou, O sinner, but a broken and believing heart? Dost thou but return by repentance and faith in JESUS CHRIST to

(g) Rom. viii. 3. (r) 2 Cor. v. 21. (s) Heb. iii. 16. (t) Rom. v. 21.

to G O D, thou hast no reason to doubt, nay, thou hast the infallible word of the LORD, who cannot lie, to assure thee that he will be All in All unto thee, that he will be thy Covenant-God and Father, that thou shalt have the inheritance of his children, and in a word, that he will supply all thy need, not according to thy faint conceptions, or fainter prayers, but "according to his riches in glory in CHRIST JESUS (u)." And now should not our hopes be placed intirely upon our G O D, as the author of our felicity? Since there is enough in G O D for our happiness, and since G O D is as willing to bestow as he is able to communicate, what should we do but join with the royal Psalmist, and say, "And now, LORD, what wait I for!" "My hope is in thee."

As a Conclusion of the subject, shall we not, my friends, one and all agree, in dependence upon the influences of divine power and grace, to place our hopes in G O D? We are well assured of the uncertainty, the frailty, and the vanity of this world and all its enjoyments. We have had this truth published aloud to us in the sudden death of one of the greatest and best of Kings; the report is gone forth, and is sounding not only through our land, and throughout *Europe*, but throughout the world. We ourselves are drawing nearer and nearer to the end of our days, and shall shortly have no portion of all that is enjoyed, and indeed no

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concern

(u) Phil. iv. 19.

concern in all that is done under the sun. What then do we wait for? Why should we wait always upon lying vanities and empty shadows? Is it worth while to be always thus employed? or is it not at once a folly and a degradation to our spirits, thus unprofitably and meanly to spend our days, when we are at the brink of the grave, and at the door of eternity? Why should we trust to creatures that are sure sooner or later to disappoint us, and are no better than bruised reeds, that must eventually betray our hopes and leave us in despair?

Come then, let us obey the voice from the heavenly glory, that bids us "Come up hither." Withdrawing our expectations from lying vanities, let us turn the current of them to our GOD, and to him alone. Let us above all things "seek his favour, which is life, and his loving-kindness, which is better than life." We see there is enough in GOD for our supply, more than we are able to ask or think; we see thro' JESUS CHRIST a new and living way opened for our comfortable access to GOD, and for the richest communications of blessing from him; and shall we not then place our hopes in GOD alone? Let us hope in him, (there is sure ground on which we may drop our anchor) and plead with him for the pardon of all our sins for the sake of his Son, his righteousness, merits, and mediation. Let us hope in him, and plead with him for the renewal and growing sanctification of our natures; hope in him, and plead

plead with him for spiritual consolation and joy; and hope in him, and plead with him for an admission, an abundant entrance at Death, into his eternal kingdom and glory.

Look up, O man, from this precarious unsatisfying world to thy GOD. Why shouldst thou, the offspring of GOD, and the heir of eternity, bury thyself like the mole or worm in the earth, and forget that there is a glorious and everlasting sun to enlighten, comfort, and bless thee? The voice of GOD tells thee that happiness is not here, and to this thine observation and experience agree; give then to thy GOD thine heart, as he requires, and he will shelter and uphold thee by his power, guide thee by his counsel, supply thee by his grace and spirit, and at last lead thee by a Father's gentle hand, into his glory, "where thou shalt behold his face in righteousness, and shalt be satisfied," when "awaking" from this region of dreams and shadows, "with his likeness (x)."

Well, it is enough, (so said an excellent Minister in his private meditations, and so let us all say, and GOD grant it may be with his Spirit) 'all my earthly schemes are broken; let my fancy be vain upon them no more. Let the other world be now my all, and my heart be all in it. My present joys, and pleasing hopes, let them spring from thence *:" or let

(x) Psal. xvii. 15.

let us say, in the words of my text, *And now,
LORD, what wait I for! My hope is in thee.*

*An H Y M N suited to the foregoing
Sermon.*

I.

HOW vain is life, and vainer still
The bubbles of its stream!

Its every joy is mix'd with ill,
And all are but a dream.

II.

See! **HONOUR** mounting swift and high,

But soon the vapour dies:

See! **WEALTH** allure the dazzled eye,

But while we gaze it flies.

III.

Earth shall no longer fix my hope,

No more command my choice;

Not Nature's self can bound my scope:

I aim at nobler joys.

IV.

To thee, my **GOD**, thou source of love,

Of wisdom, truth, and might;

In

In whom I live, and breathe, and move,
I wing my joyful flight.

V.

O let me feel thy gracious smile!
My ALL depends on thee;
From shadowy bliss and fruitless toil
Into thine arms I flee.

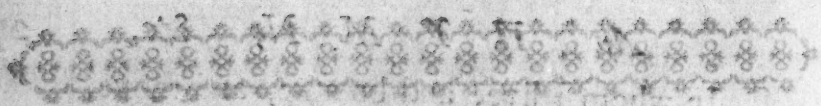
VI.

Union with thee will make me blest,
And fix my tossing soul:
So wandring needles find their rest
With their attracting pole.

VII.

LORD, send thy Spirit from above
To sanctify my heart;
And bind me in the cords of love,
That we may never part!





S E R M O N II.

The return of the Body to earth at Death.

From the late Mr. [Name] of [Location].

THE last stage conveyed to the grand Repository of the ashes of the Great and illustrious the remains of our late and most august and most excellent Sovereign George the Second. After he had long reigned the British scepter, and had long enjoyed and as long adorned the imperial Crown of these Kingdoms, Death, impartial and inexorable Death, in the command of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, executed his sacred commission upon him, and put a period to his life and reign.

THE last stage conveyed to the grand Repository of the ashes of the Great and illustrious the remains of our late and most august and most excellent Sovereign George the Second. After he had long reigned the British scepter, and had long enjoyed and as long adorned the imperial Crown of these Kingdoms, Death, impartial and inexorable Death, in the command of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, executed his sacred commission upon him, and put a period to his life and reign.

SERMON

Preached November 10, 1725, at the late Mr. [Name] of [Location].

S E R M O N II*.

The return of the Body to earth at
Death.

ECCLES. XII. 7.

*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was,
and the Spirit shall return unto GOD who
gave it.*

THE last *Tuesday* conveyed to the grand
Repository † of the ashes of the Great
and Illustrious the remains of our late
most august and most excellent Sove-
reign **GEORGE** the Second. After he had long
sway'd the *British* Sceptre, and had long enjoyed,
and as long adorned the imperial Crown of these
Realms, Death, impartial and inexorable Death,
at the command of the King of Kings and Lord
of Lords, executed his awful commission upon
him, and put a period to that life and reign
which

* Preached November 16. 1760. the Lord's day after the inter-
ment of his late Majesty.

† Westminster Abbey.

which had shone in such unclouded and amazing glory, and had shed such eminent and unbounded blessings upon mankind; and he is now sleeping with the Kings of the earth, is lain down in his last silent mansion to rise not till the heavens are no more. Thus does one end await royal grandeur and majesty, and poverty and meanness; thus doth the empire of Death alike extend to the mightiest monarch and the most despicable slave. In this respect "one event happens to all, and there "is no discharge in this war," whatever fortitude and wisdom may be able to achieve in contest and battle with our fellow-worms.

Be it my business, after such a striking and melancholy event, to fix your meditations upon some instructive, suitable, and important subject, and where shall I find one more adapted to these purposes, than the passage I have read, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the Spirit unto God who gave it?"

This chapter presents us with a most beautiful and affecting picture of man in his decays of nature, and his final departure by death from our world. It opens with a most excellent advice, ver. 1. "Remember now thy creator in the "days of thy youth, while the evil days come "not, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt "say I have no pleasure in them." Remember thy creator, or *thy creators*, (the word is plural) *Father, Son, and Spirit*, who all united in the creation of the world and in the creation of man;

man, and let this remembrance of thy creator, not be adjourned till old age, no, nor to the meridian of life, but "remember thy creator, "in the days of thy youth," the season of the most vigorous activity and brightest sunshine of life, even "before the evil days come," the evil days of weakness and infirmity, and before the years are not yet arrived, when thou shalt say, from melancholy experience of their vanity, and thine irksome weariness and fatigue to sustain thyself under the growing burdens of nature, "I have no pleasure in them." "While the sun, ver. 2. or the light, or the moon, or the stars be, "not darkned, nor the clouds return after the "rain." Remember thy creator, or creators, before thine eyes shall be so dimmed and decayed by age, as that thou shalt neither be able to enjoy the sun, or light, or moon, or stars, but shalt find thyself so unable to exert the sight of thine eyes, as that even the lustre of these luminaries of heaven shall seem darkness or only twilight to thee, and a cloud shall gather and settle upon thine eyes, after they have through weakness been frequently watering, and have distilled their drops, and even their showers of weeping and wasting rain. "In the day, ver. 3. "when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, "and the grinders shall cease because they are "few, and those that look out of their windows "shall be darkned." "In the day when the "keepers of the house, the hands and arms, the "guardians

‘ guardians of this house of clay, shall tremble
‘ through their imbecility and impotency to per-
‘ form their natural services and functions ;
‘ when the strong men, the legs and thighs,
‘ shall bow themselves, as unable to support the
‘ weight of the body placed upon them ; when
‘ the grinders, the teeth that chew and prepare
‘ the food for the stomach, shall cease their
‘ wonted service, because of the smallness of
‘ the number that remains ; and when those
‘ that look out of the windows, when the eyes
‘ that look out from their sockets, which may
‘ be called the windows of the body, shall be
‘ overspread with darkness, and in vain look
‘ out as they once did, to espy and give notice
‘ of the dangers that may threaten that cita-
‘ del of which they are the appointed watch-
‘ men.’ “ And the doors, ver. 4. shall be shut
“ in the streets, when the sound of the grind-
“ ing is low ; and he shall rise up at the voice
“ of the bird, and all the daughters of music
“ shall be brought low.” ‘ When the doors,
‘ the lips and other parts of the body shall be
‘ shut, together with the streets, or the grand
‘ passage of the body with all its subservient
‘ channels and roads of life ; when the sound
‘ of the grinding, the sound arising from the
‘ chewing of our food, shall grow weak and
‘ faint, and scarcely be heard ; and when the
‘ poor feeble old man shall be startled even at
‘ the voice of the bird, or have his sleep bro-
‘ ken by the least noise, or rather when he
‘ shall

‘ shall be unable to sleep, but wake at the
‘ cock’s crowing, before nature has had its full
‘ refreshment and rest;’ “and when the daugh-
“ ters of music,” the ears, that drank in the
‘ sound of harmonious music, and were to
‘ music as the dutiful daughters to the mother,
‘ ready to receive and attend its call and plea-
‘ sure, “shall be brought low,” shall be quite
‘ exhausted and spent, and unable to receive
‘ those silver accents, and tuneful vibrations,
‘ which once so much captivated and enter-
‘ tained them.’ Also, ver. 5. “When they
“ shall be afraid of that which is high, and
“ fears shall be in the way, and the almond-
“ tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall
“ be a burden, and desire shall fail, because man
“ goes to his long home, and the mourners go
“ about the streets.” “When timorous fear-
‘ ful old age shall be afraid to look down from
‘ any eminence, or shall be afraid to ascend to
‘ it, lest it should totter and fall; when the
‘ almond-tree, *grey hairs*, white like the blof-
‘ soms of the almond-tree, that flowers so early
‘ in the spring as *February*, shall flourish; when
‘ the grasshopper, the flightest lightest thing you
‘ can imagine, shall be felt as a burden by that
‘ old age which finds it so hard to sustain it-
‘ self; when all desire after meats and drinks,
‘ and other corporeal gratifications, shall fail,
“ because man goes to his long home,” to the
‘ grave, his long home, in distinction from any
‘ habitations he had here, which were rather

‘ inns than homes; “ and the mourners go
 “ about the streets;” when the mourners for
 ‘ him appear in the streets, with their tokens
 ‘ of lamentation, and the awful signs that the
 ‘ person for whom they mourn is deceased, and
 ‘ lost to our world.’ And what appearances of
 this kind do we now behold in the public and
 mournful memorials that our late King is dead,
 and that we shall see him no more? “ Or ever,
 ver. 6. “ the silver cord be loosed, or the gol-
 “ den bowl be broken, or the pitcher be bro-
 “ ken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at
 “ the cistern.” ‘ When the *silver cord*, the
 ‘ spinal marrow, that like a silver cord runs
 ‘ down the back, is loosed, and is of no more
 ‘ service; when the *golden bowl*, the mem-
 ‘ brane that incloses the brain, which may be
 ‘ called for its shape *a bowl*, and for its useful-
 ‘ ness a *golden bowl*, shall be broken. When
 ‘ the *pitcher*, the great artery that receives the
 ‘ blood from the heart as the fountain, shall
 ‘ be broken, and no more receive its precious
 ‘ contents; and diffuse them abroad in a gene-
 ‘ ral and vital circulation:’ “ And the wheel
 “ shall be broken at the cistern;” ‘ As much
 ‘ may be said,’ says an ingenious commentator
 upon this passage*, ‘ for ought I know, for
 ‘ supposing the *lungs* to be the wheel, which
 ‘ are continually impelled to and fro, and have
 ‘ such an office in the circulation, and to which
 ‘ and through which the *arteria pulmonalis*, as
 ‘ a

* *Reynolds's* Notes to his philosophic Poem on Death, p. 10.

‘ a cistern, conveys the blood, and refunds it
‘ again into the heart.’

“ Then shall the dust,” and so come in the words of our text, “ return to the earth as it
“ was.” ‘ When these great instruments of
‘ life, and springs of its regular operation, have
‘ ceased their functions, “ then shall the dust
“ return to the earth as it was, and the Spirit
“ shall return to GOD who gave it.” ‘ That is, according to the exposition of a judicious commentator *, ‘ the body, made of a mouldering
‘ substance, being no longer a fit habitation
‘ for the spirit, (and therefore deserted by it)
‘ which held the parts of it together, shall
‘ crumble again into the earth out of which it
‘ originally came; according to that sentence
‘ passed upon *Adam* in the beginning, *Gen.*
‘ iii. 19. “ Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt
“ thou return.” ‘ This body was no better in
‘ its first principles, and though now we are
‘ very fond of it, as if it was some goodly thing,
‘ yet when the spirit leaves it it will appear indeed to be but dust. But the spirit, the nobler part of man, being of an higher original, shall return to GOD, who sent it into the
‘ body, to be disposed of by him according to
‘ the sentence he should pass upon it.’ The *Chaldee Paraphrase*’s explication of the latter part of the verse is very apposite, “ It shall return,” that it may stand in judgment before GOD: for *Elohim*, the word here rendered

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GOD,

* *Patrick* in locum.

GOD, in the *Hebrew* language signifies a judge.

In discoursing upon my text, “ then shall
 “ the dust return to the earth as it was, and
 “ the spirit shall return unto GOD who gave
 “ it;” I shall take into consideration the two
 propositions of my text, one, “ that at death
 “ the dust returns to the earth as it was;” the
 other, “ that at death the spirit returns unto
 “ GOD who gave it.” We begin,

I. With shewing, that “ at death the dust
 “ returns to the earth as it was.” Here we
 shall consider why the body may be called *dust*;
 what is intended by its *return to the earth*, and
 what by its returning to the earth *as it was*.

1st, We shall consider why the body may be
 called *dust*. By dust we are undoubtedly to
 understand our bodies, for as we are constitut-
 ed but of two parts, *body* and *soul*, and as the
 soul or spirit is immediately distinguished in our
 text from the dust, as having a very different
 allotment, it is impossible to conceive of any
 thing else which the wise man can intend by
dust, but the body, or the mortal and corporeal
 part of our frame. This body is stiled *dust*,
 and it will be our present business to enquire
 upon what account it bears this name. And
 there are several reasons that may be rendered
 why the body may be called *dust*; as,

(1.) The body may be called dust because it
 was made out of the dust. “ And the LORD
 “ GOD

“ GOD formed man of the dust of the ground (a).” And are not we, as we are descendents of *Adam*, and consequently the children of him who was made of the dust, “ of the earth, and “ therefore earthy ? “ Howbeit, says the Apostle *Paul*, discoursing on the Resurrection, “ that “ was not first which was spiritual, but that “ which was natural, and afterwards that which “ is spiritual (b). The first man is of the earth, “ earthy; the second man is the LORD from “ heaven. As is the earthy, such are they that “ are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are “ they also that are heavenly. And as we have “ borne the image of the earthy, we shall also “ bear the image of the heavenly.” What are these bones, and sinews, this flesh, this head, these arms, hands, and feet, but *earth* curiously modelled, and variously and beautifully shaped and disposed by the GOD of infinite wisdom and power, “ by whom we are fear- “ fully and wonderfully made (c)?”

Go to the church-yard, and see whether the sepulchres and graves are not the inclosures of dust and rottenness. Life being departed from the Body, and time having mouldered and destroyed its curious contexture, and harmonious system, the remains are only an heap of dust, and scarce to be distinguished from the common ground upon which we tread. And while these bodies are continued in life, do they not derive their supports from the earth, and would

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(a) Gen. ii. 7. (b) 1 Cor. xv. 46. (c) Psalm cxxxix. 14.

it not be impossible for us, according to the established laws of the God of nature, to continue a week or day together in strength and vigour, unless we received fresh recruits from the animals that are slain for our subsistence, or from the harvests of the field, and the herbage of the ground, which are but dust appointed to sustain, incorporate, and mix with dust? We dwell in houses of clay, and not only our foundation is in the dust, but our building is dust (*d*). And the Apostle, speaking of our bodies, calls them the earthly houses of these tabernacles (*e*). "I am, says *Abraham*, but *dust* and *ashes* (*f*)," animated dust and ashes, in which there is indeed an inextinguishable heavenly spark, but soon must that spark ascend to its original skies, and leave the ashes behind; "*the dust* must re-
"turn to the earth as it was."

2dly, The body may be called *dust*, because of its liableness to mutability and change. Iron, steel, silver, and gold, those strong materials and parts of our world, have a solid and hard consistence, but how fickle and inconstant is the dust of the ground? A whirlwind, the tread of the foot, nay the lightest breath will remove the dust, alter its form and place, or scatter it into a thousand atoms. And are not these bodies exposed to great variation? How different are they now from what they were at their first creation, when "God saw our substance yet being imperfect (*g*)?" What alteration

(*d*) Job iv. 19. (*e*) 2 Cor. v. 1. (*f*) Gen. xviii. 27. (*g*) Psal. cxxxix. 16.

teration passes in a little time upon these frames of flesh and blood? The infant extends his little form, and shoots up, and enlarges into the stature of man. The man, from flourishing strength, and it may be a large growth and bulk of flesh and blood, shrinks and drops away from his former self in the revolution of a few years, and sickness and age oftentimes reduce him from a full corpulence into a skeleton and the very shadow of death. Health and disease make great changes upon us, the first adding to, and the other taking away from these bodies of flesh; and indeed, as is well known to the natural philosopher, our bodies are in a continual variation, and particles from ourselves are ever flying from us, and particles are as constantly succeeding in their room, so that there is no moment of our lives in which we can be said properly to continue in one state. We are creatures that are made subject to vanity, that is to frailty and change (*b*). Vanity has a dominion over us, and we are ever feeling more or less of its power, "Man at his best estate is altogether vanity (*i*)."

3^{dly}, and lastly, The body may be called *dust*, because it is but of little value. Dust you know is but of little account, it covers the face of the earth, and is freely trod upon without any regard to it. And what are these bodies, however some may paint and adorn them, and indeed boast themselves of them, and seem to live

D 4

to

(*b*) Rom. viii. 20.(*i*) Psalm xxxix. 5.

to no other purpose than to oblige and gratify their inclinations, what are these bodies, I say, that they should be so highly rated? for though they are the workmanship of God, as indeed so is the smallest fly, and the meanest reptile, and therefore ought in this respect to be honoured, yet as they have the scars of the apostasy upon them, as they are under the sentence of death, and as they are the seats of inordinate affection, and the great tempters of mankind to iniquity, and the instruments of it; in these views, and upon these accounts, our bodies are to be but little esteemed, at least in comparison with the great inhabitant, the intellectual and immortal spirit that sojourns for a while in these tabernacles of clay. Hence does the Apostle, speaking of our bodies as they are found in the present life, call them “vile bodies (*k*),” or as the words might more literally be translated, *the bodies of humiliation*; that is, bodies humbled by the fall, and become mortal, or bodies which humble and depress the indwelling spirit: a like case as if a king or prince instead of dwelling in a palace was to be confined to a poor hut, or as if the high priest of old, instead of residing in the magnificent and holy temple of his God, should be turned out into an impure sty of swine. “Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, “for wherein is he to be accounted of (*l*)?” “Dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one,” so contemptible, worthless, vain, and depraved creature,

(*k*) Phil. iii. 21.

(*l*) Isa. ii. 22.

creature, "and bringest me into judgment with thee (*m*)?" We may justly own our kindred with the meanest reptiles, and say as *Job*, "I have said to corruption, thou art my father, and to the worm, thou art my sister and my mother (*n*)."
 Nay, we are but worms ourselves, "How much less man that is a worm, and the son of man which is a worm (*o*)?" It is but a clod, however refined and wonderfully modified under the hands of its divine former, of which our body is composed, and it is brittle and mouldring, "a wind passes over us and we are gone," and our place that once knew us, knows us no more: we are crushed sometimes before the moth, and we may well say, as renouncing the thought, "Is my strength the strength of stones? or is my flesh of brass (*p*)?" No, our strength is weakness, and our flesh is frailty. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass; the grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away (*q*)."
 I proceed,

II. To consider what is intended by the Body's returning to the earth: "Then shall the dust return to the earth." And the meaning of the wise man in saying that the dust returned to the earth lies easy and obvious to all, though but few, very few, it may be, duly lay this truth to heart. When death arrests us, when the body loses its powers, stops its motions, and re-
 signs

(*m*) *Job* xiv. 3.(*n*) *Job* xvii. 14.(*o*) *Job* xxv. 6.(*p*) *Jcl* vi. 12.(*q*) *1 Peter* i. 24.

signs its breath, we well know that it becomes a lump of dull and insensible, and, if it was not soon removed, of putrifying and noisome earth, and there is, as to activity and force, no difference between a dead body, a mere corps, and a common stone or clod under our feet. The outward form and size indeed of the body may for a while remain, but even these must decay and be lost. Accordingly when persons die, though our dearest relatives and friends, we quickly commit them first to the coffin, and next to the grave, the one the inner chamber of death, and the other, "the house appointed for all living." Then does the dust return to its earth. The body falls and sinks to the earth as it were of its own accord, as weary of the burdens of life, and when we lay it into the grave, we return the body to its earth, that the earth may receive its own with usury: "earth is laid to earth, ashes to ashes, and dust to dust." The earth showed its propriety in us all the days of life, by never willingly suffering us to stir off its face by causing us to gravitate to it, and hereby preventing us as by a chain or clog from ever getting out of the sphere of its influence; and at death the earth opens its bosom to receive its right, and we are first by death, and then by the grave, swallowed up in victory. Thus does the dust return to the earth. I come,

III. And

III. And lastly, To consider what may be meant by the dust returning to the earth "as it was." "Then shall the dust return to the earth *as it was*." And by the dust returning to the earth "as it was," we may be referred back to what was the original of man, or what the body was before God formed it or quickned it into being. "And the LORD GOD formed man of the dust of the ground (r)." Such as the materials were of which the human body was first composed, such shall they become at death, mere earth; like as the vessel made of clay, but which was cast into beautiful form by the potter's hands, when it has been used for a time, is by some means broken, and then is mingled with the common clay from whence it was originally taken. Or perhaps the wise man may respect the state of the body when it came into the world, and so the sentiment will be the same with that of *Job*, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither (s)." The dust shall return to the earth "as it was," stript of all its gay attire, and sparkling ornaments with which it may now be invested, and which may draw the honours of the world upon us through which we are passing. We may here adorn the body with gold, and pearls, and costly array: here kings wear crowns, sway sceptres, clothe themselves in imperial robes, and draw after them a splendid train, but the dust shall ere long return to the earth

(r) Gen. ii. 7.

(s) Job i. 21.

earth "as it was;" or it will be but a vanity, and a thing of nought to bestow upon death any fopperies, or lay into the dust along with the body any thing more than what decency may require. In this view we may understand the words of the Psalmist. "Be not thou afraid
 "when one is made rich, when the glory of
 "his house is increased: for when he dieth he
 "shall carry nothing away with him, his glory
 "shall not descend after him. Though whilst
 "he lived he blest his soul, and men will praise
 "thee when thou dost well to thyself, he shall
 "go to the generation of his fathers; they shall
 "never see light (t)." And thus have I particularly considered the first proposition of our text, "Then shall the dust return to the earth
 "as it was." I shall reserve the consideration of the other proposition, "And the spirit unto
 "God who gave it," till the next Lord's day, if God spares life and health, and shall conclude the present discourse with some Application of what has been said. And,

I. Learn hence the effects of sin, and be excited to hate and abhor it. Whence is it that the great God should build thousands and millions, and more than thousands and millions of human bodies, and bestow upon them such power and wisdom, the curiosity of a God, for so may I stile the wonders of his creature man, and then should break in pieces his own workmanship, and remand back dust to dust!
 Whence,

(t) Psalm xlix. 16.

Whence, I say, is all this? See the original curse like an overwhelming eclipse spreading through the human race from *Adam* the original transgressor, "Dust thou art, and unto dust" shalt thou return (*u*); and, "By one man sin" entred into the world, and death by sin, and "so death passed upon all men, in that all have" finned (*w*)." When you look upon the ruins of death, remember that it was sin that brought in death, and armed him with all his cruel darts, and destructive power. This was the enemy that has done all this. "The sting of death" is sin (*x*)." O how hateful then should sin be to us! Let us never play upon the hole of this asp, nor put our hands upon this cockatrice's den! We have tasted, and we shall taste yet more of its bitter fruit, let it then be ever odious in our eyes. Its mischiefs, its vileness, its sinfulness are writ in the ashes of all the dead, and will one day be written in our own. Let us not then cherish that abominable thing which our God hates, and which has been the cause of so much mischief to us. Here, hatred for hatred, revenge, reprisals for injuries, wound for wound, and death for death, will not only be allowable and innocent, but commendable, glorious, and god-like. O! let sin then be crucified and slain, let it die daily, as it has caused us to die daily, and may God grant us of his Spirit of grace and holiness that while we live, we may not live to sin, but to our God, that

so

(*u*) Gen. ii. 19.(*w*) Rom. v. 12.(*x*) 1 Cor. xv. 56.

so when we die we may die unto the LORD, so that whether living or dying we may be found the LORD'S!

2. How different the views, and how various the nature of man! "Then shall the dust re-
"turn to the earth as it was, and the spirit un-
"to GOD who gave it." Two principles are united together to constitute the nature of man. A clod, a piece of animated clay, and an immaterial, rational, and immortal spirit. He is an abridgment of the two worlds, the animal and the angelical. His body is evidently only a structure of earth, though curiously moulded and diversified, while his soul is a spirit, the offspring of the Father of Spirits, and endowed with the high capacities of thought, intelligence, and choice. Such a Being, so multiform and complicate is man! And these two principles, body and spirit, are held together by this breath that is passing to and from our nostrils almost every moment, at least when the breath departs the union ceases. Strange phenomenon indeed! as if a wreath of smoke, or a breath of air, should be the tie of a sunbeam and a lump of clay together! We need not then look abroad for wonders, we have them displayed upon ourselves, and the more we contemplate, the more we may admire the constitution of man; he is formed of the dust of the ground, and yet the Almighty has "breathed into him the breath of
"life, whereby we are become living souls (y)."

3. Since

(y) Gen. ii. 7.

3. Since the body is nothing other or better than dust, let us not pride ourselves in it, or live only to pamper and gratify it. We have seen that the body is dust; so it is called by the wise man in our text, and so it is really found to be. Do not then let us pride ourselves in it. If our bodies are moulded into a very agreeable and graceful form, or if the pencil of nature has liberally bestowed its charming colours upon us, yet let us not pride ourselves upon these trifling distinctions above our fellow-creatures, remembering that we are but painted dust, and that as we are made of dust, so that the dust will soon claim its own, and what are become of comely propositions, or the admired tincture of skin in the coffin, the shroud, and the grave? There diminutive littleness sleeps at the side of stately stature, and crippled deformity at the side of celebrated beauty, and alike mingle their ashes of humiliation together. Neither "let the mighty man glory in his might (z)," nor the beautiful woman glory in her beauty; all is nothing better than a fading landskip painted upon clay, and a transient picture hastening into decay and ruin. Neither let us live only to pamper and gratify our bodies. "Is it fit that princes should walk on the earth," that souls should become slaves to the body, and that servants should be set on horses, and bear down all before them, to allude to *Eccl. x. 7.*? Our body is but dust, our other part is spirit, the

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(z) Jer. ix. 24.

one at death sinks into the dull mass from whence it came, the other mounts up and ascends to that glorious Being who gave it. Let us not then live only to pamper and gratify our bodies. Let the body be the servant of the soul, and the soul the servant of God. Let us know how to possess our vessels, according to what we are commanded, "in sanctification and honour (a)." Let us take care how we ever suffer the body, by the fumes of intemperance, and the thralldom of lust, to become a still more improper and impure dwelling for the soul, and thereby displace it from its throne, darken and vitiate its powers, and suffer the body to usurp a dangerous and shameful tyranny over the soul. Let us remember that the soul is, under God, to reign, and the body to obey; for what comparison is there between the high-descended and immortal spirit, and the low-born, frail, and perishing body; the one the brother of the worm, the child of earth, and the other in a subordinate sense the similitude and son of God? "for we are all his offspring (b)," "and he is the Father of our spirits (c)." I only add,

4. And lastly, Let us remember, for our consolation, that though our bodies as dust return to the earth from whence they were taken, yet that they shall one day be raised in immortal life, and incorruptible and inconceivable glory. These bodies indeed at present, as we have seen, are vile bodies, or bodies of humiliation, but they

(a) 1 Thess. iv. 4. (b) Acts xvii. 28. (c) Heb. xii. 9.

they shall not always be such, but if they are bodies belonging to believing and holy souls, though they shall go down to the grave, and see corruption, they shall one day, at the coming of our blessed Redeemer, be quickned into immortal life, and adorned with incomparable and undecaying glories. They go down to the dust, and pay homage for a while to their original, but they shall not continue for ever in this state of dishonour and weakness; JESUS the resurrection and the life shall give them a glorious resurrection, and an eternal life. Because he is risen, and has entered into his glory, they shall rise and enter into their glory. They shall be "fashioned like unto his glorious body," according to the working whereby he is able "to subdue all things unto himself (d). So "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law: But, thanks be to GOD, who gives us the victory through our Lord JESUS CHRIST (e)." Remember, O christian, amidst a weak, distempered, troublesome, sinful body, remember amidst the alarms of death, in the approach of death, in the sight of the conquests of death, that thy body is the purchase of thy Redeem-

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(d) Phil. iii. 21.

(e) 1 Cor. xv. 54.

er as well as thy soul, and that he has said, and will fulfil his gracious word, "I will ransom it from the power of the grave, I will redeem it from death; O death, I will be thy plagues, O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes (*f*)."

He that built thee at first can rebuild thee again, and he who made thee a mouldering cottage, can and will build thee a mansion fit for thy spirit, and so shall thy soul and body be for ever with the LORD, and both in a perfection of holiness and happiness without measure and without end; wherefore let us comfort ourselves with these words, and carry along with us the light and joy of faith in a future glorious resurrection even into the valley of the shadow of death. We fall to rise, and drop the body for a while to receive it again, to wear it again, not with ails and aches, sins and sorrows, but dressed as a bride for her bridegroom in robes of immortality and glory.

(*f*) Hof. xiii. 14.

*An H Y M N suited to the foregoing
Sermon.*

I.

WHatever bloom or strength we boast,
Whatever birth we claim,
Th' Almighty Maker from the dust
First rear'd the human frame.

II.

II.

Atoms, how changeable are they,

The sport of ev'ry breath ?

And mutable alike our clay,

And soon dissolv'd in death.

III.

How mean the foil we always tread,

And crumble into Dust ?

And say, what better are the dead

We to the grave entrust ?

IV.

The flesh, howe'er apparell'd now

With grandeur's gorgeous train,

Stript of its sparkling pride, must go

Where night and horrors reign.

V.

But though this Body must resign,

Of death the certain prey,

Disdain not, LORD, to call it thine ;

Still own the slumb'ring clay.

VI.

Then, like a child awak'd from rest,

At the last trumpet's sound,

This flesh shall in thy beams be drest,

And with thine image crown'd.

* * * * *
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 * * * * *

2. Е. М. О. И. III.

The return of the soul to God in the
New morning of Death.

1890

ECOLE XII.

and the Spirit shall return unto God who
shall lead the just to the world as it was.

my friends who are rational beings, avoid, if
and indispensable exercise and duty. Nay, can we,
of reason, but it appears also to be its expected
only the distinguishing endowment and privilege
capacity of looking into eternity (seems to be not
hour or moment he actually possesses. This
and which will as certainly be present as the
demon in the hereafter that may lie before him,
his prospects, and endure what will be his con-
X X X about what is present, but to enlarge
X X X ing for every rational being not mere-
X X X T is quite natural and highly accom-



S E R M O N III.

The return of the Soul to G O D in the
day of Death.



E C C L E S. XII. 7.

*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was,
and the Spirit shall return unto G O D who
gave it.*

✱✱✱✱ T is quite natural and highly becom-
✱ I ✱ ing for every rational Being not mere-
✱ ✱ ly to employ his views and concerns
✱✱✱✱ about what is present, but to enlarge
his prospects, and enquire what will be his con-
dition in the hereafter that may lie before him,
and which will as certainly be present as the
hour or moment he' actually possesses. This
capacity of looking into futurity seems to be not
only the distinguishing endowment and privilege
of reason, but it appears also to be its expected
and indispensable exercise and duty. Nay, can we,
my friends, who are rational beings, avoid, if

we would never so fain, the consideration of what will be our state and circumstances, when our days on earth are numbered and finished, as they shortly will, according to the established laws of nature, the declarations of God himself, the universal ravages of death, and the presages and tokens of mortality which we feel in ourselves? Hear then, O man, what will be thy case whenever death comes, "then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." The text, you will observe, consists of two propositions, the first, "that at death the dust shall return to the earth as it was," and the second, "that the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." The first of these propositions we have considered in the former discourse, and we now come,

Secondly, To consider the other proposition, namely, "that the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Here are several things that deserve our most serious and careful attention. As,

- I. Let us enquire what we are to understand by the *spirit*.
- II. Let us enquire whither it returns in the day of death.
- III. Let us consider what may be intended by God's giving us our spirit, and the mention of him in this view. And,
- IV. and lastly, I shall shew that the spirit in the

the day of death makes its immediate return to that God who gave it.

I. I shall enquire what we are to understand by the *spirit*. Two very different Beings constitute the nature of man, body and spirit: as to the body, or the *dust*, for the body is no better when it has passed under the change of death, this returns to the earth as it was; but as to the *spirit*, the other part of the human nature, this returns at death to God who gave it. And what is this spirit? or what does the wise man design by it? I answer, He means that thinking Being, that principle of thought, intelligence, volition, and activity, which we all find within us; and however inadequate our powers are to define it, as the eye that surveys all things has never, and can never behold itself, yet this we are certain of, that there is a principle of this sort residing and operating in us, and the very *doubt*, if any *doubt* there can be, concerning its existence, is a most powerful argument of its Being: for I will take it for granted, a point that is capable of solid proof, that they are not flesh, or blood, or bone, that think, (and *doubt* we are sure is thought) and that therefore there must be something in us besides and above this corporeal system, that must be the fountain of thought, reflexion, and the like operations, which we feel within ourselves†. Now this

E 4 prin-

† 'Considering,' says an ingenious writer, 'how much the operations of the soul exceed the utmost power of matter, it is pretty

principle we, according to the language of scripture, and particularly our text, denominate *spirit*, in distinction from the *body*; by which spirit we mean that amazing Being that meditates, ponders, and contrives, and that with one instantaneous exertion penetrates into the recesses of the earth, the abyfles of the sea, or ranges through the vast expansion of the heavens, comprehends their glorious orbs, and ample spaces in its idea, nay, even soars beyond them all, contemplates the great God himself, and launches itself into invifible, infinite, and uncreated perfection. The spirit is that Being that not only thinks, but that reviews itself, its own temper and actions, and that is either a source of comfort or terror to itself, according as it compares itself with the law of God, and observes its own conformity to it, or violation of it. This spirit,

• strange, that any one should so far forsake his reason, as to rank
 • it among material Beings. For how is it possible that a lump of
 • clay or dirt, with all the formation and refinement imaginable,
 • should ever be able to make a thinking Being, or grow up into
 • the soul of a philosopher? How is it possible that from the
 • motion of the blood and spirits, which are no more than globu-
 • lar particles of matter, there should arise an understanding, that
 • in the twinkling of an eye can expatiate through the universe,
 • assign the paths of the heavenly bodies, and measure the circles of
 • their motion; span the whole surface of the earth, and dive into
 • its capacious womb, there to discover the numerous offsprings
 • with which it is continually teeming; that can sail into the
 • world of spirits by the never-varying compass of its reason, and
 • discover those invifible regions of happiness or wo, which are
 • altogether out of our sight, while we stand upon this hither shore;
 • and, in a word, that can ascend from cause to cause to God, who
 • is the cause of all, and fixing its eyes upon the lovely object,
 • lose itself in the contemplation of his divine perfections.”

Stackhouse's Body of Divinity, p. 219.

spirit, though neither seen by the eye, heard by the ear, or felt by the touch ||, under God has been the investigator of all those arts and sciences, and the author of those wise and happy contrivances and procedures which have been, and still continue to be beneficial to mankind, and wonderfully efficacious for the preservation of the order and enjoyment of the world. But it is not my business to enter into a minute and particular enquiry into the nature of the soul or spirit; it is enough for my present purpose to distinguish this spirit from the body, and then to proceed to tell you whither will be its assignation, and what will be its state at death; only let me observe one thing concerning this spirit, which may justly tend to elevate and raise our minds to proper sentiments of it, and this is, that it is made in the likeness of God himself, by which I now design to fix your thoughts not on his *holy*, but his *natural* likeness, or the likeness to God, not as to *moral purity*, but as to *essence* or *constitution*. It is very observable for this purpose, that at the creation of the world by the divine command “the earth brought

|| רוח spiritus, ventus, &c. ורוח spiravit, quia ventus non videtur, transfertur ad significandum omne id, quod visum vel aspectum fugit, sive sit corporeum, sive incorporeum.—Designat hominis alteram partem essentialem, quâ vivit, intelligit, vult, & movetur. Stoccius in verb. That is in our own language, *Ruabb*, spirit, wind, &c. is derived from *Ravalb* he hath blown; and because the wind is not seen, the word is transferred to signify every thing invisible, whether it be corporeal or incorporeal.—The word intends that other essential part of man by which he lives, understands, wills, and is moved.

“brought forth grass, and the herb yielding seed—that the waters brought forth fishes—
 “and that the earth brought forth cattle, and
 “beasts, and creeping things;” but when man was to be formed, we hear God saying, as in council, (the sacred Three being, as we may consider the passage, represented as conferring together upon the important occasion) “Let
 “us make man in our image after our likeness (g);” and God is accordingly said “to
 “have created man in his own image, and that
 “in the image of God created he him (h).” And elsewhere it is said, “that the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and
 “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,
 “so that man” is said to become “a living
 “soul (i).” Analogous to this account we find such passages in scripture as stile God “the
 “God of the spirits of all flesh (k),” as “call
 “us his offspring (l)” and as ascribe to him the character of the “Father of our spirits (m);” by which expressions we may conceive not merely that we are the creatures of God, or the product of his will and power, but that there is a resemblance between God and man, such a resemblance as there is between a father and his children. And if we duly consider what God is, and what we are, shall we not find an evident likeness between him and us, or that a glance of the divine nature, may I so call it, has
 passed

(g) Gen i. 26.

(h) Gen. i. 27.

(i) Gen. ii. 7.

(k) Numb. xvi. 22.

(l) Acts xvii. 28.

(m) Heb. xii. 9.

passed upon us? GOD is a Spirit, that is, a pure, uncompounded, active intellect, quite of a different nature from the low, gross, and heavy dregs of matter, and such a Being is man. "There is a spirit in man (*n*). And the spirit," says our text, "shall return unto GOD who gave it." Further, GOD is invisible. We read of "the invisible things of GOD," by which, as the Apostle immediately explains himself, we are to understand "his eternal power and God-head (*o*)." And we find this ascription of praise to him: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible (*p*)," &c. And are not our spirits invisible? Who ever saw, or can see them? Who ever beheld a thought either in its birth, progress, or maturity? Or whose eye so keen as to catch a volition of the will? Further, GOD is a Being of understanding, nay there is "no searching of his understanding (*q*)," and it is indeed "infinite (*r*)." We have understanding likewise, and though our understanding is no more to be compared with that of our Maker, than a spark is with the sun, or a drop with the ocean, yet we have an understanding in nature resembling that of GOD. The inspiration of "the Almighty has given us understanding (*s*)." Again, is GOD a spirit of liberty, or a spirit that has power over its own actions? Such is the privilege of man. He is not driven about by force, or in obedience to the laws of irresistible

(*n*) Job xxxii. 8.(*o*) Rom. i. 20.(*p*) 1 Tim. i. 17.(*q*) Isa. xl. 28.(*r*) Ps. cxlvii. 5.(*s*) Job xxxii. 8.

tible necessity, as the sun, moon, and stars, the planetary orbs, and our terrestrial globe, but he has a power over himself, and in this very power lies his accountableness for his temper and conduct: and though, as I think it is a saying of *Austin*,
 ‘ Without divine grace there is no salvation,
 ‘ yet without freedom of will there is no day of
 ‘ judgment.’ Further, the all-glorious JEHOVAH is possessed of dominion, and his dominion is absolute, universal, and eternal; for his kingdom rules over all, and “ he does according to his
 “ will in the army of heaven, and among the
 “ inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay
 “ his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou?
 “ And his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
 “ and his kingdom is from generation to generation(*t*).” Now a borrowed delegated ray of power and empire has this LORD of time and eternity given to his creature man, “ and God
 “ blessed them,” our first parents, “ and said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and have
 “ dominion over the fish of the sea, and over
 “ the fowl of the air, and over every living thing
 “ that moves on the earth(*u*). Thou hast made
 “ him,” says the Psalmist speaking of man, “ a
 “ little lower than the angels, and hast crowned
 “ ed him with glory and honour. Thou madest
 “ him to have dominion over the work of thine
 “ hands; thou hast put all things under his
 “ feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts
 “ of the field; the fowls of the air, and the
 “ fish

(*t*) Dan. iv. 34, 35.

(*u*) Gen. i. 28.

“fish of the sea, and whatsoever passes through
 “the paths of the sea (x).” I shall not dispute whether this dominion is not weakened in some measure by the fall, but yet certain it is, that this dominion in some measure still remains, and man is still in manifold instances governor of the world of animals, and he has many of their lives and services in his hands, and as he is a pensioner and dependent upon God, so they are pensioners and dependents upon him. Man is the viceroy under God of this lower world, and has not only a pre-eminence above other creatures as to nature, but has a pre-eminence as to dominion over them; and this by the charter of God himself. I only add, that, Is God incorruptible and immortal? Does he remain the same amidst all the generations of time, the ravages of death, and the vicissitudes that take place upon human and sublunary things? So likewise is our spirit, that spirit that at present is lodged in these bodies of flesh, incorruptible and immortal. Though our bodies are frail and weak, and must sooner or later return to the earth, and see corruption, yet our souls are very different Beings, and instead of being subject to decay and death, they are heirs of immortality. The soul is made in the image of God, in the image of his own eternity, and as God abides for ever, so the soul will abide for ever, and it will no more be extinguished or hurt by the fall of these earthly tabernacles, than

(*) Gen. i. 28.

(x) Ps. viii. 6, 7, 8.

than the sun will be destroyed or damaged by the fall of that building, be it the mud-walled cottage, or the imperial palace, into whose rooms it is darting its beams. Scripture assures us of the incorruptibility and immortality of the spirit. "The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal (y)." This then is that spirit, that Being, that important and essential part of ourselves, that at death returns "unto GOD who gave it." It is our spiritual, thinking part, that part of ourselves which is created in the image of GOD, and which, of all creatures in the world, is most like himself, in its perfections and powers. I come,

II. To enquire whither the spirit returns in the day of death. "And the spirit," says the wise man, "shall return unto GOD who gave it." It does not descend with the body to the dust of the ground, but it mounts upwards, even to that "GOD who gave it." The vail of flesh drops off, and the inhabitant, the spirit, goes its way to that great FATHER of spirits, whence it came. The earthen pitcher is broken, and the heavenly flame, shut up for a time within it, ascends to that eternal sun who first kindled it into being, and whose offspring it is. And here it may be asked, "For what purpose is it, that the spirit returns unto GOD who gave it?" or, Why does it not in the day of death

(y) Matth. xxv. 46.

‘ death sink down with its old companion and
 ‘ partner, the body, into the dust, but take a
 ‘ quite different road, and instead of falling
 ‘ down into the earth, soar to the regions above,
 ‘ and return to that God whose throne is in
 ‘ the heavens, and who there resides as in his
 ‘ appropriate and settled palace ?’ Our answer
 is, That it is proper that the spirit should return
 unto God ;

(1.) Because he is our Judge. He made us
 the Beings which we are, and he has preserved
 us, provided for us, and comforted us, all the
 days of our pilgrimage ; he has furnished us
 with our reasonable powers, and he has given
 us his holy and righteous laws as the rule of our
 lives, and consequently it is fit that he should
 be our Judge, and as such he reveals himself to
 us in his word, and as such we may expect to
 meet him in the day of death, the day when the
 bands of animal existence are dissolved, when
 the earthly cottage falls to the earth, and when
 “ the spirit is to return to that God who gave
 “ it. God shall bring every work into judgment,
 “ and every secret thing, whether it be good or
 “ evil (z).” At death we appear before him, who
 is “ the Judge of all.” He not only knows our
 words and actions, but he knows also the very
 inmost recesses of our souls. “ O Lord, thou hast
 “ searched me, and known me. Thou knowest
 “ my down-sitting, and mine up-rising, and
 “ thou understandest my thoughts afar off (a).”
 And

(z) Eccl. xii. 14.

(a) Psal. cxxxix. 1, 2.

And as he thus knows us, knows us to the most inward privacies of our spirits, the most hidden designs and principles of our souls, so he is likewise a God of justice, “and we shall receive from him the things that we have done in the body, according to that we have done, whether good or bad^(b).” As that God to whom our spirits return is too wise to be mistaken in our case, so he is too righteous ever to pronounce a wrong sentence upon our state: and let me add, that he is too great, when he has decided our condition, ever to be compelled to alter it, or hindered from executing it. No judge so wise, so holy, so powerful as God; and to his tribunal death will dismiss our disembodied spirits, where we must undergo the scrutiny of those eyes, which “are as a flame of fire,” and in consequence of this appearance before him as our Judge we shall,

(2.) Receive the sentence from God to everlasting happiness, or everlasting misery. If we are found among the number of the saints of God; if we are justified by divine grace, through “the redemption which is in JESUS CHRIST;” if we are renewed and made holy by the influences of the Holy Spirit; if we have the characters of the children of God stamped upon us, and their temper wrought in us, then shall it go well with us at the divine tribunal. Then shall it be said to us, “Well done, good and faithful servants; ye have been faithful over

“a

(b) 2 Cor. v. 10.

(c) M

"a few things, I will make you rulers over many things, enter ye into the joy of your LORD."

(c) From the judgment-seat we shall be admitted with praise and glory into the fruition of the heavenly joys, "and so shall be for ever with the Lord," only waiting for the adoption, to-wit, the redemption of the body to consummate our felicity. But if, on the other hand, we are found at the day of death in an unpardoned, impenitent, and unregenerate state, if the soul rises from its falling clay, and ascends to its God with unforgiven guilt to testify against it, and with the stains and pollutions of inveterate and unsubdued iniquities upon it, then must it hear its tremendous doom from the mouth of its Judge, "Cast ye this unprofitable servant into outer darkness, where are weeping and gnashing of teeth (d)." And then shall the spirit be driven away in its wickedness with the curse of God upon it into the regions of torment and despair, there to await the resurrection of the body, not to immortal life and glory, but to shame and everlasting contempt, and to receive the unabated fulness of its misery in the punishment of an "everlasting destruction from the presence of the LORD, and from the glory of his power (e)." This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him of the LORD (f)." I proceed,

III. To

(c) Mat. xxv. 23. (d) Mat. xxv. 30. (e) 2 Thess. ii. 9. (f) Job xx. 29.

III. To consider what may be signified by GOD's giving us our spirits, and the mention of him in this view. And we may observe a beautiful contrast in the text. The body, no more animated, no more invigorated with life, no more capable of action, shall return to the earth whence it came, and as destitute of all worth and excellency as the common dust into which it is deposited, and with which it is mingled. But as to the spirit, unrelated to dust, by no means in any sense whatsoever the offspring of it, but of a much higher and spiritual nature, this shall not take a downward road, but spring upward as flame to flame, while the clod sinks to its native clods. The spirit shall go to its GOD, to its Father, whence it came, to him who was its immediate author. GOD by his breath kindled the spirit, and sent it a while to sojourn on earth in a tabernacle of clay, but earth has no power over it in the day of death, and the body resigns it from its falling ruins, as the open dungeon sets free the long-confined captive, or rather as the open cage gives liberty to the long-imprisoned bird, to clap its joyful wings, and tower into its beloved skies. The breath departs, the tie dissolves that held body and soul together. Down drops the body to the earth, away flies the spirit "to that GOD who gave it." Their owners receive each their property again. The open bosom of the earth, as its mother, receives the body. The great LORD
of

of all, as its Father, takes the spirit into the hands of his paternal mercy, or his inexorable justice, and disposes of it according to his sovereign pleasure, directed by his wise and holy laws. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." I come,

IV. and lastly, To shew that the spirit in the day of death makes its immediate return to that God who gave it. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." You know that the body immediately upon death returns to the earth, for though it is not in the very next moment after death lodged in the earth, yet it becomes earth, a dull, insensible, lifeless clod, and it presently, however beautiful and beloved once, in order to prevent its being a nuisance to the living, is actually laid into the ground, and earth with its bars is shut and heaped upon it. As to "the spirit, it is said in our text, the same text that declares that "the dust returns to the earth as it was, to return to that God who gave it;" that is, 'it immediately returns to God who gave it;' for why should the same sort of expression be used concerning the spirit, which is used concerning the body, and yet contain a very different meaning, and this without the least necessity? Only think with yourselves, that if it was said upon any occasion that at such a time such a person went

one way, and such a person another, whether you were not taught to conceive, that at the same juncture the two persons took their respective roads, and in like manner what can be more easy than for us to interpret the dust returning at death to the earth, and the spirit returning unto God who gave it, as importing that the return of both to their proper parents took place at the same instant? Besides, if the spirit does not return to God, when the body returns to its dust, I ask, Whither does it go? It must either stay in the body, or it must not: If it stays in the body, why then does it not discover its residence there, as in former times? Or how comes it to pass, that there should be no traces or signs of its dwelling there? Or, what! is it fallen asleep? What! Thought, active intelligence, incorruptible, and immortal spirit fallen asleep? Does this seem likely? Or should we be ready to admit such a strange and uncomfortable sentiment without reason, especially since the sleep of the soul appears to be no way different, as to any perceivable exercise and operation, from its utter and absolute extinction? Or what did *Solomon*, or rather the *Holy Ghost* by him, intend, when it is declared, that "the dust returns at death to the earth as it was, and the spirit unto God who gave it," that the body and soul went down to the earth together, and that the soul did not return to God till the body was raised again, that is, till thousands of years after death? And let me add, that there are several

veral other passages in sacred writ, whence we may conclude, that the spirit upon death makes its immediate return to GOD. If we consider what is said of the saints, we shall find, that their spirits, instead of lying down with the body in the dust, are admitted into a state of happiness and glory, and that with their GOD and SAVIOUR. "For we are confident, I say," the words of the Apostle *Paul*, "and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the LORD (g)." So again, "I am in a strait," says the same Apostle, "betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with CHRIST, which is far better (h)." And the same inspired writer tells us, that "whether we live, we live unto the LORD; or whether we die, we die unto the LORD: so that whether we live or die we are the LORD'S (i)." CHRIST assures the penitent thief, that "on that day," the day of their crucifixion and death, "he should be with him in Paradise (k)." When *Stephen*, amidst bloody and barbarous violence from his murderers, was resigning his life and spirit, he prays, "LORD JESUS, receive my spirit (l)." The Apostle *Paul* acquaints us, "that he knew in whom he had believed, and that he was persuaded that he was able to keep that which he had committed to him until that day (m);" not keep it surely in dust and dishonour, not keep it as far distant from him

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(g) 2 Cor. v. 8.

(h) Phil. i. 23.

(i) Rom. xiv. 8.

(k) Luke xxiii. 43.

(l) Acts vii. 59.

(m) 2 Tim. i. 12.

him as earth is from heaven, not keep it locked up in slumbers equal, as to insensibility and estrangement from him, to annihilation itself : such keeping would reflect no high praise on the SAVIOUR, and would be no great source of pleasure to our minds, in our antecedent contemplations upon it : rather let us understand his keeping it in activity and glory, keeping it in the arms of his power, in the bosom of his love, and in the reciprocations of perpetually communicated blessings upon it, and the perpetual exercises of its pleasing admiration, grateful homage, and unutterable transport and joys. Thus will our LORD keep the spirits of his saints " until that day," the day of his second appearance. The day of death is what I may stile the day of the soul's accession to its heavenly mansion, and happiness, and the day of CHRIST'S second appearance is the day of its public and solemn coronation. As a King is a King, and is in the possession of his kingdom, and his royal honours, before the day of his coronation, but yet still this day is observed and celebrated in order to give a visible and open manifestation of his title to, and his investiture with the royal character and glories. And agreeable to this view of the matter, we read of " the manifestation of the sons of GOD (*n*). " And the Apostle *John* says, " that now are we the sons of GOD, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear

(*n*) Rom. viii. 19.

“ appear we shall be like him, for we shall see
 “ him as he is (o).” I might add further, in
 proof of the immediate felicity of the spirits of
 good men upon their dismissal from their bo-
 dies, the account that our LORD gives of *Laza-
 rus*, that when he died, “ he was carried by an-
 “ gels into *Abraham’s* bosom (p):” and I might
 mention also the declaration of the Apostle to the
Hebrews, “ that we are come not only to GOD
 “ the judge of all, but to the spirits of just men
 “ made perfect (q). But, I believe, from the
 passages already produced, that the point will
 appear sufficiently clear to all who have a due
 regard to scripture, that the souls of good per-
 sons, when the body dies, enter immediately in-
 to a state of happiness. And is it not as evident
 from the same oracles of truth, that sinners, upon
 the death of their bodies, enter, as to their spi-
 rits, upon a state of punishment and misery.
 Thus it is said that “ *Judas* by transgression fell
 “ from his apostleship, that he might go to his
 “ own place (r).” What! to the grave, which
 is the case with even the best saints? No; but
 undoubtedly to his place of torment. In like
 manner the Psalmist *Asaph* says, speaking of
 those very men, “ as to whom there are no
 “ bands in their death, and whose strength is
 “ firm, how are they brought down into deso-
 “ lation, as in a moment? they are utterly con-
 “ sumed with terrors.” And then he adds, “ As
 F 4 “ a dream

(o) 1 John iii. 2. (p) Luke xvi. 22. (q) Heb. xii. 23.
 (r) Acts i. 25.

“ a dream when one awakes, so, O LORD,
 “ when thou awakest, thou wilt despise their
 “ image (r).” And in the very same parable of
 our LORD’S where we are taught the happiness
 of the poor man at death, we are taught the mi-
 sery of the rich man upon his dissolution, and
 are told that “ in hell he lifted up his eyes, be-
 “ ing in torments, and saw *Abraham* afar off,
 “ and *Lazarus* in his bosom,” and that upon
 this sight he cried, “ Father *Abraham*, have
 “ mercy upon me, and send *Lazarus*, that he
 “ may dip the tip of his finger in water, and
 “ cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this
 “ flame (s).” Upon the whole, we learn,
 that the scriptures evidently concur in the ac-
 counts of the good and bad in this truth, ‘ That
 ‘ the spirit immediately at death returns to
 ‘ GOD who gave it, to receive its sentence, and
 ‘ enter upon a state of happiness, or a state of
 ‘ misery.’

As I design to devote a whole discourse to
 the Improvement of our subject, I shall con-
 clude with only one reflexion upon what has
 been said.

If we are careful when we appear before an
 earthly sovereign, a man like ourselves, no bet-
 ter than a sceptred worm among fellow-worms,
 whose power only extends to this world, and
 who must soon die like ourselves ; I say, if we
 are careful to appear in a proper dress, and a
 becom-

(r) Psal. lxxiii. 4, 19, 20. (s) Luke xvi. 23, 24.

becoming manner, if we watch his royal smile, or a favourable speech from his lips, and enjoy their blessings, O! what preparation should there be for our appearance before GOD, the Majesty of heaven and earth, whom we shall soon see eye to eye, and face to face, and who will determine our everlasting state of happiness or misery, by his smile or frown, his sentence of approval, or condemnation? O then "let us give
 " diligence," the diligence of a whole life in this case is not too much, "to make our calling and
 " election sure, that so an entrance may be mi-
 " nistr'd to us abundantly into the everlasting
 " kingdom of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS
 " CHRIST (t)." As for myself, may I at all times be able to add with the Apostle, "that I
 " am not negligent to put you always in re-
 " membrance of these things, though ye know
 " them, and are established in the present im-
 " portant and interesting truth (u), That at
 " death the dust returns to the earth as it was,
 " and that the spirit shall return unto God who
 " gave it."

(t) 2 Pet. i. 10, 11.

(u) 2 Pet. i. 12.

*An H Y M N suited to the foregoing
 Sermon.*

I.

THe soul, amazing birth, arose
 To Being by th' ALMIGHTY's breath,
 And with its FATHER's image glows,
 Secure from all the wastes of Death.

II.

II.

'Tis now to earth's low vales confin'd,
 And animates a moving clod ;
 But soon the heav'n-descended mind
 Shall quit its cell, and fly to God.

III.

But O ! what prospects shall surprize,
 What unknown myst'ries shall unfold,
 While I pass through th' eternal skies,
 And DEITY unveil'd behold ?

IV.

FATHER, in that great solemn hour
 Let me not meet thine angry frown,
 Let me not sink beneath thy pow'r
 To bottomless perdition down.

V.

Creation once has made me thine,
 Let mercy reinforce thy claim ;
 Form me thy son by pow'r divine,
 Call me thy son through JESUS' Name.

VI.

Then shall I stand before thy throne
 Approv'd, and in thy presence find
 An heav'n of bliss, immense, unknown ;
 For heav'n is there where thou art kind.

SERMON



S E R M O N IV.

The return of the Body to earth, and
the return of the Soul to G O D, prac-
tically improved.



E C C L E S. XII. 7.

*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was,
and the Spirit shall return unto G O D who
gave it.*

 HILE the beasts of the earth per-
petually tend to the ground, and
have little or no notion of futurity,
confining their view to a very con-
tracted spot, and their apprehension to the pre-
sent moment, let us, my friends, to whom G O D
has given an erect posture of body, and the yet
sublimier capacities of intellect and foresight,
look upwards to our congenial skies, and pierce,
by a steady and sacred contemplation, into the
Hereafter that lies before us ; realizing that so-
lemn, certain, and fast-advancing hour, when
the

“ the dust shall return to the earth as it was,
 “ and the spirit shall return unto God who gave
 “ it,” and let us now especially be willing to de-
 rive from such an important and interesting
 truth all that profitable and heavenly improve-
 ment which such a subject contains.

Two discourses I have already delivered upon
 our text. I told you, that the passage consisted
 of two propositions : The first, “ That at death
 “ the dust should return to the earth as it was,”
 and the second, “ That the spirit should return
 “ unto God who gave it.” Both these proposi-
 tions I have distinctly considered, and the Ap-
 plication, and Improvement of the whole will
 require our present meditations.

And may not our subject afford us Uses of
 Instruction, Enquiry, Exhortation, Terror, and
 Comfort ?

I. May we not from what has been said ga-
 ther some uses of Instruction ?

As 1st, May we not from what we have
 heard, be instructed that the spirit is to be pre-
 ferred above the body ? The body is but dust,
 dust as to its origin, dust as to its mutability,
 and dust as to its meanness. And as it is but
 dust in itself, so it is to lie down in the dust, and
 mix itself with the common earth under our
 feet. But the spirit is of a much superior nature,
 it is the offspring of God, it is made in his own
 likeness, and is a copy, however faint and im-
 perfect,

Serm. 4. of the Soul to God, practically improved. 77

perfect, of the DEITY itself. Judge you then from their different natures, which is to be preferred, the body or the soul. Whatever becomes of the body, see to it that you set a high value upon the soul, the breath of GOD, which is within you. Do not let the body engross all, no, not your principal concern. As it is inferior and subordinate, so let it have an inferior and subordinate regard, and, while you are taking care of your bodies, remember that your souls are the most essential part of yourselves, and that you are to live so as that they may live, be in health, and prosper. What man values the case before the diamonds inclosed in it, or regards his servant above his child? *Know thyself* was a maxim admired among the pagans, and let it be engraven upon the hearts of christians, and let them act accordingly. "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul (x)?" To prefer the interests of the body above those of the soul, is a sight as unbecoming as that which the wise man says he had been witness to, "Servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth (y)."

2dly, We may learn from what has been said, that they are no light and inconsiderable events that will soon take place in all and each of us. Soon shall "the dust return to the earth as it was." Of this event we are as certain, as that

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(x) Matth. xvi. 26.

(y) Eccl. x 7.

we now exist, and it would be the most extravagant folly and madness to imagine that we shall never die, or that the day of death is not near at hand. Who art thou, O man, that thinkest thou shalt not die as others have done before thee; or that thou shalt be an exception from the universal doom of heaven, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return (z)?" Are thy bones brass, or thy sinews iron? If they were, yet even these would decay; for time devours all sublunary things, though his destruction is in some instances swift and rapid, and in others leisurely and slow. Say, O man, art thou in covenant with death, or in league with the grave! Has death promised thee that his sting shall never touch thee, or has the grave assured thee that it will never swallow thee up in victory? Vain conceits such as these must be, if ever they could have place in the minds of any persons, and the body, this, that, and every human body, however lively and strong at present, must return, and soon return to the earth as it was. And remember, O man, that then thy spirit "shall return unto God who gave it." Solemn awful thought indeed! What! this spirit appear before the Father of Spirits! What new scenes and changes lie before us! To appear before God, and to appear before him to have an everlasting state of inconceivable happiness or inconceivable misery fixed, who is not amazed at the belief, when it enters but for a moment into the soul,

(z) Gen. iii. 19.

soul, but how much more astonishing must be the event itself? What GOD is, what seeing him eye to eye, and face to face is, who can tell? What matchless majesty, what overwhelming glory, what stupendous displays of greatness and perfection will then be made, who can conceive? Yet an appearance before GOD, O my soul, must be thine experience when a few years are come and gone; nay, it may be this day, this hour before the next. Immensely important, and most alarming event indeed! Who can think of it, and not own that it is the greatest that can ever take place, especially as the return of the spirit to GOD, and its reception with him, is closely and inviolably connected either with an eternity of glory and happiness, or with an eternity of horror and misery. Think, O think on this event, and how near it is to taking place. Before thou hast had time to think of it again, thy bonds of clay may be dissolved, this world may be vanished from thy sight, and thou mayest find thyself at the divine tribunal. It is but for the veil of flesh to drop, and thou shalt see thy GOD on his throne of infinite and supreme majesty, or it is but for thy breath to stop, and earth shall be no more, and thy spirit shall be returned to that GOD who gave it. Meditate, my soul, upon the certainty and nearness of this event, and remember, that however thou mayest fly from creatures, that thou canst not escape the power of thy GOD, and that thou shalt as surely behold him as thy Judge, and
final

final awarder, as thou now beholdest thy fellow-creatures, and art certain that thou art in being in the present moment.

3^{dly}, We may infer from what has been said that we are not natives of this world, but only sojourners in it. At death the dust resigns to the earth as it was. Earth receives its own again. From earth the body comes, earth was its composition, and to earth it goes in the day of death. But the spirit, on the other hand, returns unto GOD who gave it. The spirit is not of earthly or sublunary extraction; it came from God the Father of spirits, and at death it is remanded back to himself: so that while the spirit was here on earth, while it abode in this house, this tabernacle of clay, it was not with its Father, who dwells in heaven, but in a strange country, into which it was sent to sojourn for a time, and then return back to the GOD who gave it. The spirit, may I so speak, was neither born here, nor is to remain here. A consideration this, that should have a holy and happy tendency and influence upon us, not to "set our affections on things on the earth." We should regard and treat this world, as travellers do the countries through which they pass, when they are upon a journey to the country whence they came. They approve, they enjoy the pleasant scenes that open to their view, they relish, they are thankful for the accommodations of their passage, but they by no means consider the way to their home, as their home itself. In like manner,

ner,

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ner, let us be careful how we mistake earth for heaven, or let loose those affections upon our road, which are only due to the world from which we came, and to which we are ever to view ourselves as going. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the FATHER is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the FATHER, but is of the world (a)." 'At the best,' says the excellent Archbishop *Leighton*, on 1 *Pet.* i. 1. where the Apostle writes to his fellow-saints as strangers, and scattered abroad, 'the christian is but a stranger, set him where you will. It is his privilege that he is so; he forgets, and disparages himself, and descends far below his quality, when he is much taken up with any thing in his place of exile †.' "I am a stranger," says *David*, "with thee, and a sojourner (b)." As strangers and pilgrims we are to abstain from fleshly lusts (c). Our conversation," or our citizenship (d), says the Apostle *Paul*, "is in heaven. These all died in faith," says the writer to the *Hebrews*, speaking of the ancient worthies, "not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, G and

(a) 1 John ii. 15, 16. † *Leighton's Commentary on St. Peter*, vol. I. p. 7. (b) *Psal.* xxxix. 12. (c) 1 *Pet.* ii. 11. (d) *Phil.* iii. 20. Πολιτεύμα hoc loco municipatum translulit aliquoties. *Tertullianus*. Grotius in locum.

82 *The return of the Body to earth, and* Serm. 4.

“ and confessed that they were strangers and
“ pilgrims on the earth (*e*).” We came not
from earth at first. Spirits are not produced
from senseless clods, but by the great Father of
spirits, who dwells in the highest heavens, and
there has his palace and kingdom in a special
sense, and at death these spirits are not to return
to earth, but to the God who gave them; why
then should earth, that is but a foreign climate,
an island of exile cut off from the celestial con-
tinent, engross our hearts, desires, and delight,
and why should we not from this consideration
be excited to “ set our affections on things above,
“ and not on things on the earth ?” I have been
pleased, much pleased with the lines of a very
ingenious poet, who says of himself,

“ A stranger into life I’m come,
“ Dying may be but going home*.”

And certainly this is the case at death with the
saint, since we are assured that “ the spirit re-
“ turns unto God who gave it.” O that chris-
tians would but remember this, and behave
accordingly ! We come,

II. To an Use of Enquiry. And,

1st, Are we ready to part with this body, and
consign it to the earth from whence it came ?
Are we sincerely willing in the full consent and

(*e*) Heb. xi. 13. * *Green’s Poem on the Spleen.*

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acquiescence of our minds, that our bodies should return to the earth as they were? Have we no objection against the unalterable eternal law, the holy and sovereign pleasure of heaven? Though it is no very desirable thing in itself to be unclothed from the garments of flesh that wrap so closely about us, but we should rather be clothed upon at once, instantaneously, without any thing of the pains, or gloomy appearances of death, that so mortality might be swallowed up of life, yet are we, since it is the will of our God that we should not arrive at glory but by passing "through the valley of the shadow of death," and staying a time as to a part of ourselves in the subterranean chambers of the grave, sincerely submissive to the determination of heaven? and are we ready to resign and die at the divine command? What is the will of God should be our will; and since it is his pleasure that we should, as to our bodies, return to the dust and see corruption, are we willing, as an expression of our obedience to our Sovereign and our Father, that his will should be done in us and by us? and that our bodies, as we have seen the bodies of others, perhaps the bodies of the most eminent saints, should fall by the stroke of death, and become the prisoners of the grave for a season? Though the physic is in itself bitter, and the effects of it unpleasant, yet can we say, 'LORD, "not my will, but thine be done."' Do with my body as thou pleasest, only let it sleep in hope, sleep under the dew of the

‘ Redeemer’s promise of a glorious future re-
 ‘ surrection, and let my soul be saved in the day
 ‘ of death, and both body and soul bear a part in
 ‘ the Redeemer’s triumph at his second coming,
 ‘ and I murmur not, I repine not. “ The lines
 “ are fallen to me in pleasant places, and,” up-
 ‘ on the whole, “ I have a goodly heritage.” O
 blessed souls, that live above the love of life, and
 the fears of death, and that with a complacential
 spirit are ready to submit to the dishonours
 and dissolution of the body, because their GOD
 has seen fit so to appoint, and has made death
 the gate to endless life and glory. Happy frame,
 when we are contented to live, and contented,
 may I not go further, and say, choosing rather
 to die. Let us beg of GOD, that in this and all
 other respects we may be enabled heartily to
 yield to, nay, to embrace his high and holy
 pleasure, and that we may with no dismay, and
 with no reluctance drop these bodies, whenso-
 ever he calls us, not indeed as the everlasting
 prisoners, but as the temporary tenants of the
 grave, there to sleep till the last trumpet shall
 call them forth, as it infallibly will, to glory, ho-
 nour, and immortality. Though we may not dis-
 miss ourselves from these bodies, yet when the
 doors of it are set open, why should we say, “Nay,
 “ but let them come and fetch us out (f)?” Is
 it not more becoming us to walk chearfully out
 of ourselves, as our own act and choice, as the
 saints of GOD, and the children of his kingdom?
 How incongruous and unsuitable to be dragged,

as

(f) Acts xvi. 37.

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as it were, to our heaven and our home, or like *Saul* to hide ourselves in the stuff, when we are sought for to be crowned?

2dly, Are we ready, as to our spirits, to appear before God? The dust at death "shall re-
turn to the earth as it was, but the spirit shall
return unto God who gave it." And are these
spirits ready for their return to God, and secure
of a favourable and gracious reception with
him? 'My spirit,' says the sinner, and such we
all are, 'ready to meet its God! How can
this be? How is it possible? I have been so
vile and guilty before him; I have so many
sins, the plague of my heart, and the pollutions
of my life, to witness against me, and I have
in so many instances deserved that the wrath
and curse of God should be poured out upon
me, that is impossible for me to bear the
thought of appearing before God! At his
tribunal I shall be righteously condemned as
a sinner and a rebel against him, and I must
hear from him the sentence of insupportable
horror and misery, "Depart, thou cursed!
I am dry stubble; and the God before whom
I am to appear "is a consuming fire," and who
will by no means spare the guilty." I am un-
holy, he is absolutely holy; I am unjust, he is
infinitely just; I am a transgressor, he is a
jealous God; "with him there is terrible ma-
jesty." How will my spirit, loaden with guilt,
and stained with iniquity, be accepted in his
sight? I shudder at the thought of my spirit's

‘ returning “ to that GOD who gave it,” since it
 ‘ must inevitably be sentenced by him to ever-
 ‘ lasting sorrow and perdition.’ Such may well
 be the language of every sinner; and of you and
 me among the rest. But cease, O my soul, these
 dreadful apprehensions. Hast thou not fled, and
 dost thou not still fly to the blood of JESUS,
 the blood of reconciliation, that blood “ that
 “ cleanses from all sin ?” Hast thou not laid
 hold of, and art thou not daily, in every prayer
 thou presentest to the throne of grace, laying
 hold on the righteousness and mediation of
 JESUS CHRIST? Is not he thy shelter, that
 shelter which thy gracious GOD has appointed
 from the storms of divine vengeance? Hast thou
 not said, and art thou not continually saying,
 “ Behold, O LORD, my shield,” a shield with
 which thy love has furnished me, and a shield
 that will turn aside the sharpest arrows of thine
 indignation, “ and look upon the face of thine
 “ Anointed ?” Dost thou not know that, though
 thou art unworthy, yet that JESUS is worthy?
 That though thou hast destroyed thyself, yet that
 “ JESUS is able to save to the uttermost all
 “ those that come unto GOD through him ?”
 Dost thou not from day to day commit thy soul
 to that SAVIOUR, who is able to keep that
 great deposit, thine immortal spirit; and has
 he not said, that “ He that comes unto me I
 “ will in no wise cast out ?” And besides all this,
 hast thou not, notwithstanding all thy remain-
 ders of sin, and the weakness of thy graces, some
 good

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good ground to hope, that thou hast been renewed and converted by divine influence, so that thou now hatest sin, mortifiest sin, and hast set up thy standard in the name and in the strength of the great Captain of thy salvation against sin, all wilful and known iniquity, and art now become one of his willing people in the day of his power? Dost thou not love the word, the ordinances, the children, and the commands of thy God? and would it not rejoice thee to be more and more conformed to his holy image, and art thou not cleansing thyself more and more from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, and aiming and striving in dependence upon help from above "to perfect holiness in the fear of God?" Dost thou not watch against sin, not only in the open action, but in the secret inclination? And dost thou not plead, with the holy Psalmist, not only to be "kept back from presumptuous sins," but to be "cleansed from secret faults?" Hast thou not a favour, a relish of the things of God? something of a taste that the LORD has been gracious? and is there not something of that "spiritual-mindedness, which is life and peace," though there may be a lamentable experience, more especially at some particular seasons, of the in-dwelling of that "carnal-mindedness, which is death?" Art thou not conscious to thyself, that as on the one hand thou art endeavouring to crucify thy secret sins, so that thou art, on the other, found in the continual practice of secret duties? Does not many

a prayer and groan steal away, as it were, to thy God, not only when thou art in thy closet, but even when thou art engaged in the affairs of life and the world? Dost thou not aim at more than the form, even at the spirit and the power of godliness? And when Sabbaths and ordinances have passed away without any, or but faint and few experiences and exercises of devout affection to thy God, has not thy distempered, disordered frame of soul been a lamentation and burden to thee? In a word, are not the inclination and bent of thy soul towards God, “and towards the remembrance of his name?” Dost thou not desire, and not only desire but design, and not only design but labour in continual dependence upon help from above, “to do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God;” to shew forth his praises, to be a living epistle of JESUS CHRIST, and “to deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously and godly in the present world?” If these are thy experiences, O my soul, then surely thou hast encouraging reason to hope that when thy spirit shall return unto God who gave it, that he will not abhor and abandon it, but receive it into the arms of his power, into the bosom of his love, into the heaven of his blessedness and glory! Will not JESUS be thy friend, and Saviour, that JESUS to whose protection thou hast entrusted thyself, and on whom thou hast relied that he may “of God be made unto thee, wisdom, righteousness, sancti-

“ sanctification, and redemption ? ” Is not the mark of his sheep upon thee, and will not the LORD know and acknowledge who are his, and hast thou not a meetness for the inheritance among the saints in light, in this abhorrence of thy soul at sin, in this zealous desire and pursuit after holiness ? and is not sanctification the evidence of justification, and the preparative and forerunner to endless life and happiness ? Can we think that GOD will despise the work of his own hands, the work of grace and holiness, and is it not the seed and earnest of heaven and glory ?

III. Here is an Use of Exhortation.

And since “ the dust shall return to the earth “ as it was, and the spirit shall return unto GOD “ who gave it,” let us above all things be concerned that we may be ready for our return to GOD, and our appearance before him, and this both habitually and actually.

And, 1st, Let us be concerned that we may be habitually ready for our return to GOD, and appearance before him. Let us be seriously and earnestly solicitous that we may have indeed “ repentance towards GOD, and faith “ in our LORD JESUS CHRIST,” the great doctrines which the Apostle *Paul* taught as of prime and fundamental importance, and let us be concerned that these heaven-descended principles may prove themselves to be a living

ing and incorruptible seed, by their producing that "holiness without which no man shall see "the LORD." Without repentance, without faith, without new obedience, in vain do we expect upon the return of our spirits to GOD, that we shall be approved and accepted of him. Without repentance, faith, and new obedience, we shall be rejected as not having the wedding-garment, and instead of entering into the joy of our LORD, we must be bound hand and foot, taken away, and "cast into outer darkness, where "shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Our habitual readiness for an appearance before GOD lies in the communication of the new nature, in regeneration, in a conformity to GOD, the recovery of our spirits from the dominion of sin, the rectitude, the universal rectitude of our souls, in an interest in CHRIST by faith, and in a likeness to him by his SPIRIT, and therefore let us "above all things seek the kingdom "of GOD, and its righteousness, the one thing "needful," and "the better part, which shall "never be taken from us. Wisdom," this heavenly wisdom, "is the principal thing, therefore "get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get "understanding (f)." And what encouragements we have to expect that upon our seeking this wisdom we shall not be disappointed, learn from what we elsewhere read: "My son, if "thou wilt receive my words, and hide my "commandments with thee, so that thou incline

(f) Prov. iv. 7.

“cline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine
“heart unto understanding; yea, if thou seek-
“est for her as silver, and searchest for her
“as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand
“the fear of the LORD, and find the know-
“ledge of thy GOD. For the LORD gives wis-
“dom; out of his mouth come knowledge and
“understanding (g).”

2dly, Let us not only be concerned that we may be habitually ready for the return of our spirits to GOD, and our appearance before him, but let us give diligence too that we may be actually ready for this most important and interesting event. Let us be concerned not only that we may have grace, not only that we may have oil in our vessels with our lamps, but that we may never be left to slumber and sleep. Let the principle of grace be in daily exercise, and let our loins, as our LORD directs, be girded about, and our lamps burning. Every day let us renew our faith in JESUS CHRIST, laying its hand over him as our propitiatory sacrifice, confessing over him our sins, and looking to him for absolution and acceptance, as the effects of his righteousness and mediation. Every day let us renew our repentance and resolutions against sin, and call in, by prayer, help from above, that the grace of our GOD may be sufficient for us, and that his strength may be perfected in our weakness. Let us every day, as it were, afresh gird on the christian armour, and
be

be ever upon our guard against our spiritual enemies, knowing, that if they cannot, blessed be GOD, deprive us of the principle of holiness, yet they may rob us by their prevailing upon us to yield only for a moment to them, of our comfort and joys. Let us give diligence to attain a regular holy frame of mind, and let us be as careful that we are not dispossessed of it. Avoid the presence and communications, as far as you can, of evil examples, and evil companions. Let there be no long space between your devotions, and your seasons of communion with heaven. Earth is but a cold climate, and filled with unwholesome fogs and damps, frequently therefore recruit and revive your celestial fires, that they may be like the lamps of the tabernacle of old, permanent and unconsumed. Live every day, as if it might prove your last, and had death prepared to rush upon you in some one or another of its moments. Be cautious how your hearts are too much immersed in worldly businesses, or too long diverted by worldly recreations, however innocent they may be in themselves. Every morning you awake, try to awake with GOD. And every evening you commit yourselves to rest, commit yourselves into the hands of your heavenly FATHER. Die daily, that so you may have less of death to feel when he comes. Be concerned that ye may not have your evidences to seek, when you should have them to shine. How much better to have an abundant entrance, to go with a full sail into the

the everlasting kingdom of our LORD and SAVIOUR, than, like the mariners in St. Paul's tempest, to make land in a storm, and with great difficulty and terror set our feet on the celestial shore? Not only see to it that you have grace, but that you grow in grace; in a word, I know no better advice that I can give you, than that of the Apostle *Jude*, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves in your most holy faith, praying in the HOLY GHOST, keep yourselves in the love of GOD, looking for the mercy of our LORD JESUS CHRIST unto eternal life (b)."

IV. We may, from what has been said, deduce an Use of Terror.

And think, O sinners, think how dreadful will be your condition, if reconciliation has never taken place between GOD and your souls. Your "dust returns to the earth as it was," to lie as a malefactor shut up in a prison till dragged out to execution. As to your spirit, at death "it returns to GOD who gave it," to be rejected, condemned, and eternally punished by him, who is its Creator and Sovereign, and whose unatoned justice, and almighty power, will make it for ever miserable. Your "dust returns to the earth as it was," and your "spirit returns to that GOD who gave it."—O what horror, O sinner, if thou livest and diest in thy present state, will ensue! "Who can dwell in devouring fire, or who can
" dwell

(b) Jude 20, 21.

“ dwell with everlasting burnings ?” What a tremendous punishment, to be shut out of heaven, and what an insupportable anguish, to be plunged into hell ! Think, sinners, upon your condition. Would to GOD that you did but duly lay it to heart. “ Knowing the terrors of the “ LORD,” we would persuade you to “ fly from “ the wrath to come ;” for, blessed be GOD, you are “ as yet in the world of hope,” in a world where GOD reveals himself on a throne of grace. GOD is rich in mercy to the vilest sinners that repent and turn to him. The blood of JESUS CHRIST cleanses every soul that believes in him from all sin. The influences of the Spirit, to sanctify and save, are sovereign and efficacious. Cry then mightily to GOD, that he would have compassion upon you ; that he would prepare you by faith, repentance, and holiness, for an appearance before him, and do not delay, do not makelight of this advice, when your eternal interests are depending. “ Seek ye the LORD, now he “ may be found, and call upon him while he is “ near (*i*). Now is the accepted time, now is “ the day of salvation (*k*).” May GOD enliven and awake every stupid frozen sinner, if any such there be in this assembly ! May he “ send the “ rod of his strength out of Zion, smite the “ flint, and turn it into a fountain of waters !” May divine grace excite every such sinner to “ flee for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope “ that is set before him,” and to enter into the ark,

(*i*) *Isai. lv. 6.*(*k*) *2 Cor. vi. 2.*

ark, the only ark of salvation, before the storms of divine wrath shall fall, and he shall be swept away by the floods of irresistible and everlasting destruction.

V. and lastly, Here is an Use of Consolation to the people of GOD.

At death "the dust shall return to the earth" as it was," but it will not always lie there in dishonour and ruin; it sleeps in JESUS, and the morning of the resurrection will produce it "in power and great glory," with a lustre like that of the glorified body of the Redeemer, and with a joyful certainty that it shall die no more. So that GOD has given commandment concerning the bones of his saints, and they are only waiting for a glorious redemption from the power of the grave. But more than this, think, O saint, that at death thy "spirit shall return unto GOD who gave it." It shall go home to GOD, go home in triumph, with angels for its convoy, go to be honourably received, and graciously welcomed into the palace and beatific presence of its GOD, and to go no more forth. Then shall the saint hear from the voice of its Almighty LORD, and most merciful FATHER, the blessed *euge*, "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy LORD" (1). "The saints are to enter into it," says a great

(1) Matth. xxv. 23.

great writer upon the place, 'which notes both
 ' the plenitude of their right, their LORD bids
 ' them enter; and the plenitude of this joy it-
 ' self, they are to enter into it; and the domi-
 ' nion it must for ever have over them, they are
 ' to be absorbed by it, lose themselves in it, not
 ' so much to possess it, as to be possessed by it.
 ' And the perpetuity of that possession is inti-
 ' mated; we are told of their entrance into it,
 ' nothing of their passing out of it any more:
 ' the last thing we hear of the saint is that he
 ' is gone into joy †.' This shall be the end of
 the saints and servants of GOD, and it is soon to
 come: no long tedious revolutions of thousands
 or hundreds of years divide between them and
 their promised happiness. A few years at most,
 and it may be a few days or hours or moments,
 may bring them to their GOD, the consumma-
 tion of their LORD's promises, and the fulfilment
 of their own best desires and hopes. How active
 then and diligent should saints be in their ser-
 vices to GOD and their generation, during the
 short delay of their full felicity! How patient
 and magnanimous should they be under their
 forest trials! How gladly should they hail and
 congratulate the tokens of their dissolution, such
 indeed in one sense, but in another the tokens
 of immortal life, and the dawnings of the cele-
 stial glory! And how ready should they be to
 welcome the fall of their earthly tabernacles,
 when

† *Howe's Funeral Sermon on the death of Fairclough, folio,*
 vol. II. page 348.

when their spirits shall take wing, ascend upwards, and mingle, as it were, with that great Father of spirits, and Father of mercies, who calls them to himself, that “where he is, there they may be also !”



An H Y M N suited to the foregoing Sermon.

I.

NOW let our souls on wings sublime
Rise from the vanities of Time ;
Draw back the parting veil, and see
The glories of Eternity.

II.

Twice born by a celestial birth,
Why should we grovel here on earth ?
Why grasp at transitory toys,
So near to heav'n's eternal joys ?

III.

Shall ought beguile us on the road,
When we are trav'ling back to God ?
For strangers into life we come,
And dying is but going home.

IV,

H

IV.

Welcome, sweet hour of my discharge,
That sets my longing soul at large,
Unbinds my chains, breaks up my cell,
And gives me with my God to dwell.

V.

To dwell with God, to feel his love,
Is the full heav'n enjoy'd above ;
And the sweet expectation now,
Is the young dawn of heav'n below.



28 SE60

SERMON



S E R M O N V.

The certainty, manner, and end of our
LORD's second coming.



REVEL. XXII. 20.

He which testifies these things, saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, LORD JESUS.

IN this book of the *Revelation* we find
I the Apostle *John* banished into the
isle of *Patmos*, “ for the word of
“ GOD, and for the testimony of
“ JESUS (m).” In this lonely exile his gracious
and faithful Master visits his servant, opens in a
various scene of wonders the secrets of futurity,
and at last, after a view of a long and dreadful
reign of distress and misery, shows him in the
visions of GOD the *New Jerusalem* descending
out of heaven, whose privileges, magnificence,
and glory, are described to us in the two last
H. 2 chapters.

(m) Chap. i. 9.

chapters. Towards the end of the chapter of our text, which indeed closes this book of the *Revelation*, we hear our LORD speaking in person, and among other things which he declares, we hear him asserting, "He which testifies these things, saith, Surely I come quickly:" to which a reply is made, either in the person of the Apostle, or rather as the voice of the church, "Even so, come, LORD JESUS." As to the *Amen* in the middle of the verse, it may be referred to our LORD, as a solemn confirmation of the truth of what he spoke. "He which testifies these things, saith, Surely I come quickly, *Amen*." 'So it will be, so it shall be, and nothing shall be able to blast my purpose, or oppose and prevent my coming.' Or the *Amen* may be joined to the latter part of the verse, and then we shall refer it to the person or persons who make the reply to our LORD: He says, "Surely I come quickly," the answer is *Amen*, 'so be it: so let it be: so we wish it to be.' "Even so, come, LORD JESUS." I shall consider the *Amen* in the sense in which it may be generally understood, as connected with the latter part of the verse, and consequently a part of the echo to our LORD JESUS CHRIST, after he had said, "Surely I come quickly."

In discoursing upon the words, I shall,

- I. Consider the declaration of our LORD, "He which testifies these things, saith, "Surely I come quickly." And

II. I

H. I shall enquire into the answer here returned to the declaration of our LORD,
 “ *Amen. Even so, come, LORD JESUS.*”

I. I shall consider the declaration of our LORD,
 “ He which testifies these things, saith, Surely
 “ I come quickly.” Here are several things that
 may deserve our particular attention.

1st, We may observe, that our LORD will
 come.

2^{dly}, That he will come quickly.

3^{dly}, That his coming, and his coming quick-
 ly is an event sure and certain. And,

4^{thly} and lastly, We shall enquire for what
 ends our LORD will come.

1st, We may observe, that our LORD will
 come. Our LORD is now gone into the heaven-
 ly world. Having finished his course of suffer-
 ing and sorrow, of reproach and death, having
 put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and
 proved himself a glorious conqueror over death
 and the grave, he ascended up into heaven as
 our forerunner, advocate, and intercessor. And
 in that world, as his native home (for he was
 but a sojourner and stranger in ours) he now re-
 sides and reigns, and from thence he shall one
 day come in the pomp and glory which become
 him as the Lord of life, and the Prince of hea-
 ven, and the final Judge and awarder of all to
 their everlasting state. “ Ye men of *Galilee*,” said

the angels at our LORD's ascension, "why stand
 "ye gazing into heaven? this same JESUS,
 "who is taken from you into heaven, shall so
 "come in like manner as ye have seen him go
 "into heaven (n)." And our LORD himself
 tells us, that "the Son of Man shall come in
 "his glory, and all the holy angels with him,"
 as if all heaven should be for a time exhausted
 of its bright inhabitants, to attend and adorn
 the progress of their and our descending LORD,
 and that "then he shall sit on the throne of his
 "glory (o)." CHRIST JESUS shall ere long ap-
 pear, not as the babe at *Bethlehem*, not as a man
 of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, not as the
 convict at *Pilate's* bar, not in the robe of mock-
 majesty, not as the poorest of slaves, and the vilest
 of malefactors; but in the glories of deity, with
 the retinue and homage of the heavenly host, as
 the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, as the
 FATHER'S only-begotten and best-beloved SON,
 that SON who is one with himself, that SON
 whom he delights to honour, and before whom
 every knee shall bow, either by dreadful com-
 pulsion, and with trembling terror, or with wil-
 ling honour, grateful submission, and the tran-
 sports of unutterable joy. How august and mag-
 nificent will be his appearance on this day! His
 transfiguration at Mount *Tabar* was but a tran-
 sient emblem, a momentary glimpse of the glo-
 ries of the REDEEMER at his future coming.
 His ascent to heaven, inthroned in a cloud, was
 seen

(n) Acts i. 11.

(o) Mat. xxv. 31.

seen only by his disciples, but astonished nations and worlds shall now behold him. "Behold, he comes with clouds, and every eye shall see him (p)."

2dly, We may observe that our LORD shall come quickly. "Surely I come quickly." Certain it is, that many ages have passed away since this declaration was made, and there may be many more, for ought we can tell, that may roll off before our LORD's coming, but yet if we consider how the comparison vanishes between time and eternity, if we remember who it is that here speaks, the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the first and the last, and whose eye looks at once through immense duration, we may, notwithstanding so many generations of time have elapsed since this declaration of our LORD, and notwithstanding our LORD has not yet accomplished his promise, and we are still in expectation of him, I say we may, notwithstanding all this, see sufficient reason not to impeach his faithfulness when he said, "Surely I come quickly." And it is very observable that the Apostles of our blessed LORD, who were well acquainted with his mind, laboured in their discourses to prevent any such sentiment of our LORD's coming, as if by the speed or swift approaches of it, men should conceive of it as what should fall out in that age, or in the ages immediately succeeding. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and by our gathering together to him, that ye be not

H 4

soon

“ soon shaken in mind or be troubled, neither
 “ by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from
 “ us, as that the day of CHRIST is at hand. Let
 “ no man deceive you by any means; for that
 “ day shall not come, except there come a fall-
 “ ing away first, (q)” &c. In like manner the
 Apostle *Peter* tells us, “ Knowing this first, that
 “ there shall come in the last days scoffers, walk-
 “ ing after their own lusts, and saying, Where
 “ is the promise of his coming? for since the
 “ fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they
 “ were from the beginning of the creation (r).”
 To dissolve such impious suggestions, the Apo-
 stle, in the next verses mentions the deluge, and
 his argument from thence appears to be, That
 if the world once perished by the inundation of
 water, why should it be thought incredible that
 in like manner it should perish by the destruc-
 tion of fire? And then the Apostle adds, “ Be-
 “ loved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that
 “ one day is with the LORD as a thousand years,
 “ and a thousand years as one day: the LORD
 “ is not slack concerning his promise, as some
 “ men count slackness, but is long-suffering to
 “ us-ward, not willing that any should perish,
 “ but that all should come to repentance (s).”
 His delay in his coming arises from long-suffer-
 ing, and not forgetfulness. As the seed must have
 time to be sown, and to grow and ripen for har-
 vest, so must the people of GOD, and the re-
 deemed of the LAMB, have time to be born
 from

(q) 2 Thess. ii. 1. (r) 2 Peter iii. 3. (s) Verses 8, 9.

from above, to improve in grace, and be matured for heaven. Was the day of our LORD's final coming to break prematurely upon our world, the designs of divine love would hereby be blasted, and many a soul would be prevented of that glory to which it was ordained, either because it was not actually in being, or because it had not that time for repentance and preparation for heaven which GOD had determined for it, and which was necessary to give an opportunity for a meetness "for an inheritance among them that are sanctified." JESUS CHRIST then will come *quickly*. *Quickly*, for it is but a short time, a little space in his eye between the promise and the fulfilment. *Quickly*, for long as the season may appear compared with human ages, yet it is but a few moments compared with the duration of eternity. Or if after all there should seem to be a sort of force put upon language in affirming that CHRIST may be said to come *quickly* or *shortly*, when the expression must necessarily comprehend in it not only a great number of years, but even also of ages, yet there may be such a sense or senses given to the word *quickly*, which may be quite agreeable to the analogy of faith, and may not be in the least degree liable to such an objection, as that the word *quickly* must be extended to a very considerable duration: for when our LORD says, "Surely I come quickly," we may understand him as signifying, that after the foregoing prophecies, contained in the *Revelation*, were accomplished, he should then come *quickly*; he should then, speaking

speaking after the manner of men, have nothing else to attend to, nothing to hinder him from coming immediately to break up the stage of time and nature, and assign all to their unchangeable abodes, either of happiness or misery. Or if this sense appears not quite easy, what forbids why we should not understand our LORD when he says, "Surely I come quickly," as acquainting us, that he should come, whenever he did come, *quickly* or *suddenly*; he should come when the world did not expect him, in an hour they were not aware of, and the day should break upon them without any other warning or notice than what he had already given in his word, or what might be learnt from the antecedent accomplishments of prophecies, (to which the world might then perhaps but very little, if at all, attend) as signs of his coming. Accordingly, we read that "the day of the LORD should come as a thief in the night (*t*)."
 And our LORD himself tells us, that "as the days of *Noe* were, so shall also the coming of the SON of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that *Noe* entered into the ark, and knew not till the flood came and took them all away, so also shall the coming of the SON of Man be (*u*)."
 The day before our LORD comes to judgment, nay, the very hour before he comes, shall probably be as still and undisturbed as our present day or our present hour.

(*t*) 2 Peter iii. 10.(*u*) Mat. xxiv. 37, 38, 39.

hour. No fearful sights or awful sounds shall be seen or heard, it may be, till he is seen or heard himself. Our LORD's coming shall burst and blaze upon the world at once. "For as the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be (x)." Quick and instantaneous shall his coming be into our world, and his glories shall dart from pole to pole, and fill the whole hemisphere and the whole earth at once; and no sooner does the eye or the ear observe them, but behold the descending Judge appears, and summons the world to his tribunal. "Out of Zion," the heavenly Zion, "the perfection of beauty, our GOD shall shine. Our GOD shall come, and shall not keep silence. A fire shall devour before him" (but still it shall be the fire of his presence) "and it shall be very tempestuous round about. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people (y)." But, 3dly, We may observe, that CHRIST's coming, and his coming quickly, is an event sure and certain; "SURELY I come quickly." Here is no deceit or doubt in the case, for our LORD affirms it, and affirms it with a solemn asseveration, "SURELY I come quickly." And will not his word thus solemnly pledged be sufficient with us? Has he, the *Amen* and the "faithful witness," been ever known to illude and impose upon us? Was it not promised, that "the seed of the woman" should bruise the serpent's head (z)? Was he

(x) Mat. xxiv. 27. (y) Psalm l. 2. (z) Gen. iii. 15.

he not promised as our Prophet, Priest, and King? and did he not appear as “the light to
 “lighten the *Gentiles*, and the glory of his people *Israel*?” Was he not made “an High-priest
 “for ever after the order of *Melchisedec*?” and did he not execute the office of our High-priest in
 “things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of his people?” And did he not, and does he not execute the office of our King, when in spite of all the powers of earth and hell, “he ascended up on high, and led
 “captivity captive, and received gifts for the rebellious, that the LORD God might dwell among
 “them?” and when he now reigns above, as the “Head over all things to his church,” and with the keys of the invisible world and of death in his hand? Further, did not our LORD foretel the destruction of *Jerusalem*? and did not the event answer his prediction, and that in the most exact and particular circumstances? Did he not predict the dispersion of the *Jews*, and are they not accordingly dispersed throughout all nations? Did he not prophesy of the diffusion of his gospel throughout all lands, and has not his prophecy been accomplished? And did not our LORD promise the effusion of his Spirit on the day of Pentecost? and was not the Spirit poured out according to his word? Now these admirable and striking harmonies between prophecies and the subsequent events, are foundations for our hopes, nay, for our unshaken assurances, as to the fulfilment of those facts,
 which

which as yet are hid in futurity, and are there waiting for their birth? Consider who our LORD is, and thence judge whether you can indulge any doubt either as to his veracity or his power. If he has said he will come, what should reverse his design, or make his word to fail, since it is the design, the word of him "who cannot lie," and who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?" If he has said he will come, who shall hinder him? As well, or sooner prevent the sun from rising in the morning, as prevent the sun of righteousness from visiting our world again at the appointed hour. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall not pass away (a);" especially that word which has been so solemnly and so frequently pledged, and which declares an event so full of glory to his Father and himself, and of love and salvation to his people, and which will set even all the perplexity and mazes, and pour a light over all the darkness of the divine dispensations. "Where is the promise of his coming?" say the scoffers. We answer them, It is in the divine word. There it is reserved in store. It slumbers, and may slumber on for ages, but it cannot die. "CHRIST, who is our life," gives life to it, and he will one day cause it to come out, as it were, from its secret chambers, and display itself in all the glories of an ample accomplishment. Go to Nature, and let her instruct thee. A comet makes its appearance in the planetary system, and spreads its fiery train
over

(a) Matt. xxiv. 35.

over the heavens. 'This comet,' says the Astronomer, whose business it is to explore the wonders of the skies, to examine the heavenly bodies, and trace their journies, 'shall return again five hundred years hence.' He doubts not but it shall be so, provided the creation is continued in existence under its present laws, and in its present order: and, though ignorance may laugh at the belief, the sagacious enquirer into nature heeds it not. And shall not he who made the comet, and "upholds all things by the word of his power," and "who is God over all, blessed for evermore," shall not he return again, according to his promise? "Surely," says he, "I come quickly." The word is gone forth from his mouth; it shall never return vain and void. "He is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said it, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good (b)?" I proceed,

4thly and lastly, To enquire for what ends our LORD will come. "Surely," says he, "I come quickly;" and when he comes he will not come for nothing: he will not come to make an idle parade or vain splendor in our world. When he came the first time into our world, he came on an errand worthy of himself: he came "to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity." And when he comes the second time, he will

(b) Numb. xxiii. 19.

will come upon some important and interesting concern; and it shall never be said of the glories of our REDEEMER at his second coming, "For what purpose is this waste?" He shall come to raise the dead from their graves; he shall come to sit in judgment upon our world; he shall come to acknowledge his saints, and admit them to eternal blessedness; and he shall come to pronounce condemnation upon sinners, and consign them over to endless destruction.

1. He shall come to raise the dead from their graves. When our LORD comes, "they that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (c)." Marvel not at this," says our LORD, "for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the SON of Man, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (d)." Behold, I shew you a mystery," says the Apostle *Paul*, "we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (e)." Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment," shall be a voice that shall penetrate into the silent caverns of the earth, that shall break up the tombs, and even quicken into life the very depths

(c) Dan. xii. 2. (d) John v. 28. (e) 1 Cor. xv. 52.

depths of the sea : I mean, the dead that have been long buried there. Bone shall come to its bone, flesh to its flesh, and all the tribes and generations of men shall be made a-new, and stand before their God. "And I saw the dead, small and " great, stand before God (*f*). " Nothing shall resist the omnipotent word. *Adam*, and all his sons and daughters, in all their vast innumerable multitudes, their millions and more than millions, shall arise from their dust, when our LORD JESUS CHRIST " shall descend from heaven " with a shout, with the voice of the arch-angel, and the trump of God (*g*). " Death and the grave are his subjects, he holds a dominion over them, and his command at his coming shall break all their bands, and unlock all their dungeons. " O death, I will be thy plagues ; O " grave, I will be thy destruction (*h*). " This is written in the divine word, and thus shall it be done, when the LORD of life comes the second time into our world.

2. CHRIST will come to sit in judgment upon our world. " Before him," that is, before CHRIST, " shall be gathered all nations, and he " shall separate them one from another, as a " shepherd divides his sheep from the goats, and " he shall set the sheep on his right-hand, but " the goats on his left. Then shall the KING " say unto them on his right-hand, Come, ye " blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom " prepared for you from the foundation of the

" world ; "

(*f*) Rev. xx. 12. (*g*) 1 Theff. iv. 16. (*h*) Hof. xiii. 14.

world;" and then follows an account of their works of charity to his people, which he interprets as done to himself, as they were works flowing from the divine spring of faith and love to him. But to those on his left-hand he says, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels(i)."

Once our LORD JESUS CHRIST came as a SAVIOUR, and the softest mildness and condescension shone around him, but now he comes as a Judge, and the most severe and god-like majesty appears in his countenance, and is uttered from his lips. It is fit that he who was so much dishonoured and abused in our world, should in the same world be exalted and glorified: and what greater honour can be given him, than that our LORD JESUS CHRIST should be the universal and final Judge of quick and dead? and upon this high and important errand shall he ere long come. When the amazing concourse, that number which no man can number, a number like the sands of the seashore, or the drops of the ocean, shall stand before CHRIST, a division shall be made, a division into the two classes of saints and of sinners, for all other difference shall then be swallowed up and heard of no more. On the right-hand of the Judge shall stand the saints; stand, as we may conceive them, in their new robes of glory and immortality; stand with adoring homage, with pleasing astonishment, and with transport unutterable,

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terable,

(i) Mat. xxv. 32.

terable, as “the chosen of GOD,” as “the re-
 “deemed of the LAMB,” as the sanctified of the
 SPIRIT, and the heirs of eternal life and glory.
 On the left-hand of the Judge shall stand the
 herd of sinners; stand, as we may well conceive,
 with shame and confusion, with ghastly looks
 and conscious horror, and the direful forebod-
 ings of that sentence of insupportable misery,
 which shall soon not only be pronounced against,
 but even executed upon them. “The judg-
 “ment is set, and the books are opened;” the
 faithful registers, not only of our words and ac-
 tions, but even of the imaginations and thoughts
 of our hearts: “and the dead shall be judged
 “out of those things which are written in the
 “books, according to their works (*k*). For we
 “must all appear before the judgment-seat of
 “CHRIST, that every one may receive the
 “things done in his body, according to that he
 “hath done, whether good or bad (*l*).”

3. CHRIST shall come to acknowledge his
 saints, and admit them to eternal blessedness.
 “As the LORD JESUS shall be revealed from
 “heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on
 “them that know not GOD, and that obey not
 “the gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST,
 “who shall be punished with everlasting de-
 “struction from the presence of the LORD, and
 “from the glory of his power;” so he shall
 come “to be glorified in his saints, and to be ad-
 “mired in all them that believe in that day (*m*).”

Then

(*k*) Rev. xx. 12. (*l*) 2 Cor. v. 10. (*m*) 2 Thess. ii. 7.

Then shall there be a difference, a visible and public difference made between the righteous and the wicked, between him that fears GOD, and him that fears him not. To the saints belong the inconceivably joyful welcome, "Come, ye blessed of my FATHER,—and these shall go away into life eternal (n)." After these visible "heavens have passed away with a great noise;" after "the elements have been melted down in fervent heat;" after "the earth and all things therein have been consumed and burnt up," and after the general judgment is concluded, behold the children of GOD, the brethren and "joint-heirs of CHRIST JESUS," (without so much as one soul of the number left behind) returning with their returning LORD, with holy adoration, with loud and grateful *Hosanna's* and songs of triumph, to the heaven of heavens! See "the everlasting gates lifted up," and the "eternal doors opened" for a passage to the Prince of life, and his glorious train! See the vacant mansions filled! See the fountains of life set open! See "the marriage-supper of the LAMB" prepared, and the fruits of paradise, in all their rich and boundless variety, made ready! Nay, behold the DEITY unveiled in his most benign and propitious smiles, and seen "eye to eye, and face to face," and all the immeasurable bliss now actually enjoyed, which was comprehended in that promise, "In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right-

I 2

"hand

(n) *Matth. xxv. 46.*

"hand are pleasures for evermore (o)." Such will be the honour, such the happiness of the saints, and JESUS will come, come from heaven to acknowledge his people as his own before the assembled world, and to "take them to himself, that they may behold his glory," and in that glory "shine as the brightness of the firmament for ever and ever (p)." I add,

4. And lastly, That CHRIST shall come to pronounce condemnation upon sinners, and consign them over to endless destruction. It will be a miscellaneous day, the day of CHRIST's second appearance, the darkest and the brightest, the most terrible and most delightful, the most placid and the most tempestuous that the world ever saw. "The SUN of RIGHTEOUSNESS shall" on that day "arise" on his saints, "with healing under his wings," and they shall feel such life and joy in his beams, as they never felt before. This day shall be emphatically to them "a day of refreshing from the presence of the LORD (q)." But it shall be a very different day indeed to sinners. The same SUN that shall shed inexpressible light and gladness over the hearts of the saints, shall in fiery indignation and consuming terror dart unutterable agonies into the hearts of sinners, and in vain "shall they cry to the mountains and rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the wrath of the LAMB; for the great day of his wrath is come," and not the proudest nor stoutest

(o) Psalm xvi. 11.

(p) Dan xii 3.

(q) Acts. iii. 19.

stoutest among them "shall be able to stand (*r*)."
As the righteous shall be welcomed to his bosom and kingdom, so the wicked shall be rejected, and doomed to perdition. While "the wheat shall be" carefully and kindly "gathered into his garner, the chaff shall be burnt with unquenchable fire." As "the righteous shall go away into life eternal," so "sinners shall go away into everlasting punishment." They shall be "driven away in their wickedness," and under the weight of that sentence of reprobation and horror, which shall sink them into the bottomless abyss. Hell shall then open its jaws, it shall enlarge itself, and receive its total prey, the whole number of unpardoned and impenitent, of helpless and hopeless sinners. The last having entered its flaming gulph, the mouth of the pit shall be closed, the seal of the living GOD shall be fixed upon it, and there shall the miserable wretches be shut up, for ever and ever. "This is the portion of the wicked from GOD, and the heritage appointed to them by the LORD;" by that JESUS, "who has the keys" of the invisible world, and "of death; who opens, and no man shuts; and who shuts, and no man opens." Such and so various and important is the errand of our LORD, when he comes the second time into our world. And thus have I considered the declaration of our LORD, "He which testifies these things, saith, Surely I come quickly." I shall not now proceed to enquire into the an-

118 *The certainty, manner, and end of* Sermon 5.
swer returned to the declaration, "*Amen.*
" Even so, come LORD JESUS," but close the
discourse with some suitable Improvements.
And,

(1.) Are we ready for the coming of our
LORD? CHRIST will come; he will come
quickly, and he will come assuredly, and there
can be no doubt made but that as he has once
come into our world, so he will come the second
time, and that for those purposes which have
been represented: to raise the dead from their
graves, to set all mankind before him in judg-
ment, to receive his saints to eternal glory, and
to consign over sinners to endless destruction.
And shall this great event, our LORD's coming,
big with such important and amazing conse-
quences take place? As certainly as the hour
that is now upon the wing is present with us, so
surely will there be an hour that shall arrive,
when CHRIST shall come from heaven, when
he shall come to raise me from the dead, when
he shall come to set me before his bar, when he
shall come to fix me in endless happiness or end-
less misery. Then, how stand matters between
GOD and my soul? Am I prepared, am I in
readiness for this great and awful day of the
LORD? Shall I arise to everlasting life, or to
shame and everlasting contempt? Shall I stand
approved before him in judgment, and have
my sentence to heaven and blessedness, or to hell
and misery? O how general and ardent should
the

the cry now be heard among us, 'JESUS, thou
'SAVIOUR of sinners, thou wilt ere long be
'my Judge, take compassion upon me, wash
'me in thy blood, clothe me with thy righte-
'ousness, renew and sanctify me by thy SPI-
'RIT, that I may be ready for an appearance
'with acceptance before thee. Be now my
'Friend, my Redeemer, my Advocate. To thee
'would I fly; on thy sacrifice and mediation
'would I venture my guilty miserable soul.
'Save me from the wrath to come. Make me
'one of thy subjects, one of thy willing people
'in the day of thy power. Set the seal of sancti-
'fication upon me, that seal which distinguish-
'es, though thy blood alone purchases thy
'sheep, and which thou wilt not fail to own
'in the day of judgment.' Thus let us now
be "seeking to the LORD, while he may be
"found," while mercy may be had, and be cal-
"ling upon him while he is near." Though we
are unprepared, divine grace can make us ready
for the call of the bridegroom. What souls so
vile and wicked, so guilty and wretched, but
what may find hope and help in covenant mer-
cy, almighty power, and everlasting righteous-
ness? Forgiveness can triumph over guilt, sanc-
tifying grace over pollution, and salvation can
reign, as the deluge once over the highest moun-
tains, over all the curse of sin "unto eternal
"life by JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Let us then,
"now while it is called to-day," cry mightily
unto the LORD, and give him no rest till he has
brought us into his favour, and restored us to

his image, and hereby made us ready for the coming of our LORD, whether in his solemn call by death, or in his awful appearance at the day of judgment. Momentous sands these, that are now running down! Eternity depends upon them. An eternity of blessedness, if we improve them; an eternity of misery, if we neglect and abuse them. Now is the season for changing our natures and our states, the season when pardons are vouchsafed, and when divine influences are communicated; but at CHRIST'S coming "they that are unjust, will be unjust" "still; and they that are filthy, will be filthy" "still(*r*). To-day then, if you will hear his "voice," his voice that calls you to a throne of mercy, and not of justice, "harden not your" "hearts(*s*). Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and "ye perish from the way, when his wrath is "kindled but a little: blessed are all they that "put their trust in him(*t*)."

2. And lastly, Let christians be often meditating with pleasure upon the second coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. Let them be often meditating upon it, as a subject of the greatest importance and nearest concern to them. Let them lay aside little impertinencies and unconcerning trifles, to contemplate this theme, the second coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, in its amazing weight and invaluable interest to themselves, as it infolds in it nothing less than the consummation of their hopes and happiness. Let them carry about with them the faith of the
second

(*r*) Rev. xxii. 11. (*s*) Heb. iii. 15. (*t*) Psalm ii. 12.

second coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST for the purposes which have been represented, and make it intimate and connatural to their spirits. This truth, the second coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, realized and preserved in the heart of a christian, what a shield will it be against temptation? what a support under affliction? and what an antidote will it even prove against death itself, and all the poisons of that dreadful serpent? A powerful faith too in the second coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, what an incentive will it afford to duty, to all that duty which our GOD requires of us, whether it is "doing justly, loving mercy, or walking humbly before GOD?" Every step of upright obedience, every act of kindness to our afflicted and indigent brethren, even "a cup of cold water" given in the name of a disciple, every prayer, every song of praise, every victory over sin, every fresh increase in holiness, these will come up as a memorial before GOD, and one day shall not only be rehearsed over, but rewarded by the Judge of all. Let us then, instead of wasting away our thoughts and affections upon lying vanities, upon things that cannot profit, and that will shortly be no more to us than the imperceptible atoms in the air, or than the swelling or bursting bubbles of the distant ocean, summon and recollect our minds to meditate upon what our LORD says, "Surely I come quickly," and be always saying, if not in word, yet in the temper and habitual desire of our spirits, "*Amen.*" "Even so, come LORD JESUS!"

An



*An HYMN suited to the foregoing
Sermon.*

I.

SWIFT as the lightning's rapid streams
Shine all around the sky,
Shall our EMMANUEL's brighter beams
Burst from the worlds on high.

II.

Thron'd on a cloud, behold the God
In dazzling pomp appears :
Angels attend and guard his road,
And shout him down the spheres.

III.

" Arise, ye Dead"—th' Archangel cries,
His trumpet thund'ring round ;
Through Death's dark realms the order flies,
That startle at the found.

IV.

From the deep earth and deeper main
The dead spring up to day :
Asunder flies Death's ev'ry chain,
Unprison'd all his prey.

V.

" Let the whole race," the Judge commands,
" Appear before my throne—"
Swift fly abroad th' angelic bands,
And swift the work is done.

VI.

“ On either hand divide the throng—”
The Judge the order gives ;
“ To my right-hand the sheep belong,
“ My left the goats receives.”

VII.

Thus to the faints his kind award—
“ Come, all ye blessed train,
“ Enjoy the realms for you prepar’d
“ Ere time or worlds began.”

VIII.

To finners then at his left-hand—
“ My curse descends on you ;
“ Depart to endless fires, ordain’d
“ For *Satan* and his crew.”

IX.

The jaws of hell swift burst in twain,
And ev’ry wretch devour ;
As swift its jaws are clos’d again,
To be unlock’d no more.

X.

Mean time the saints, while extasy
Of joy each bosom fills,
Shall with their LORD ascend on high,
And climb th’ eternal hills.

XI.

XI.

Heav'n shall unfold, divine abode,
And welcome ev'ry guest,
In full fruition of their GoD
To be for ever blest.

XII.

LoRD, wash my guilty stains away,
Refine my sinful heart;
That in the triumphs of the day,
My soul may bear its part!



28 SE60

SERMON



S E R M O N VI.

The Church's welcome to our LORD's
assurance of his second coming.



REVEL. XXII. 20.

*He which testifies these things, saith, Surely I come
quickly. Amen. Even so, come LORD
J E S U S.*

S there is an union between CHRIST
and his people, so there are likewise a
fellowship and harmony as to their
desires and designs. Nothing can
more strongly evince the truth of this observa-
tion, than the words before us. "He," that is
CHRIST, "which testifies these things, saith,
"Surely I come quickly." This is his decla-
ration, and what he aloud and publicly pro-
claims. And in what manner is this declaration
heard, either by his servant *John*, or by the bo-
dy of his church? Is it rejected or murmured
against, or is it received in disgust and indiffe-
rence,

rence, and answered only with an unaffectionate, though decent, silence, as what was not really agreeable, while reverence and awe of the Majesty that spake the declaration, prevented a direct contradiction to it, or disputation against it? Far otherwise. The declaration is cordially received, and an echo of duty and joy is immediately returned. “*Amen*. Even so, come LORD JESUS.” ‘ To all thy pleasure, but especially
 ‘ to this thy pleasure, thy pleasure in this particular instance, declaring an event so glorious
 ‘ to thyself, and so comfortable to us, we return, with the union of our voices, and in the
 ‘ fervor of our hearts, an *Amen*, and say, “ Even
 ‘ so, come LORD JESUS.”

Our business was in the former Sermon,

- I. To consider the declaration of our LORD,
 “ Surely, I come quickly.” Our work will be in the present Discourse,
- II. To enquire into the answer of the Apostle *John*, or, if you please, that of the Church,
 “ *Amen*. Even so, come LORD JESUS.”

And here let us consider the reasons why true believers should so solemnly and devoutly wish the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. And may not true believers, such as are interested in CHRIST, wish that he may come upon the following accounts :

As he will then be glorified in a world where he has been set at nought and despised ?

As

As he will put an end to pain and sorrow?

As he will finish the reign of Death?

And as the day of our LORD's second coming will be a day of great glory to believers, and consummate their felicity?

1st, True believers in JESUS CHRIST may wish that he may come, as he will then be glorified in a world where he has been set at nought and despised. What vile and disgraceful treatment did our LORD meet with in our world? How was the prophecy concerning him fulfilled, "that he should grow up as a tender plant, and "as a root out of a dry ground," that he had "no form nor comeliness," and that when we should see him, "there was no beauty that we "should desire him?" that he was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" and that "we hid, as it were, our faces from him;" "that he was despised, and we esteemed him "not (u)?" Wretched entertainment did the Lord of glory and the Prince of peace meet with, when he was so kind and condescending as to come and tabernacle among us. How was he oppressed and harassed, how was he insulted and abused, and what impious attempts were made to blast his reputation, and make him the infamy of the people? He was called a *Samaritan*, he was reproached as being in league with *Satan*: nay, he was said to have a devil; he was accused as an incendiary and firebrand of the state,

(u) *Isaiah liii. 23.*

state, he was reproached as a madman; and, because he was a friend and a companion with sinners, and freely conversed and ate with them, not to encourage them in their wickedness, but to draw them over to the love and obedience to God and himself, and their own present and future happiness, he was vilified as a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, and a friend, that is, a party among publicans and sinners. And after the most cruel and unjust contumely that he met with in life, how did reproach and shame, as it were, concentrate and unite their whole power upon him at death? He was apprehended as a malefactor, he was forsaken by his own disciples in general, and betrayed by one of them in particular, he was rejected by his own nation, and delivered to the power of the *Romans*. He was mocked, spit upon, scourged, crucified, and reviled, and made as the offscouring of all things; and by the treatment he received we might have concluded him to have been the abhorred of God, and the vilest and most accursed among men. Such was the usage that our blessed and gracious LORD JESUS CHRIST met with, when he came the first time into our world. He, the best personage that ever wore human clay, he, the greatest friend of men, he, the light and life of the world, was thus basely and rudely treated, and the richest grace was dishonoured with the most opprobrious shame, and the divinest glories that ever shone upon our world were obscured with the darkest and grossest clouds of abhorrence and

and contempt. And if the bridegroom was thus abused, shall not the friends of the bridegroom, whose hearts are one with him, rejoice that he shall come the second time to purge away all this disgrace, and to appear like himself? If the sun, after a whole day's malignant and uninterrupted gloom of clouds, sets in a mist of fogs, and in an evening of thick impenetrable darkness, who is there that rejoices not when the next morning opens in a clear and radiant sky, and a full and unclouded effulgence of the solar glories? And if JESUS the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS thus leaves our world in reproach and shame, who is there, who has a sincere and cordial value for him, but what will hail him when he returns the second time in his own and his FATHER'S glories, and that will not wish, during the night of his absence, that the hour was come when he shall appear in that might and majesty, in that honour and lustre which of justice belong to him, and by which he will dissipate all the misapprehensions and misconstructions concerning him, as the orient beams of the rising sun scatter the shades of the thickest darkness, and pour glory and heat, peace and pleasure over the face of the nations? If our Prince whom we love has been slighted and defamed, should we not be glad to have his honours vindicated, and his enemies reconciled or put to confusion? And shall not saints, the lovers and friends of JESUS, desire that he should be exalted and glorified in our world, and owned and

K

acknow-

acknowledged as LORD and CHRIST? Is it pleasant to hear his name blasphemed? Is it agreeable to us to find his gospel ridiculed and despised? Is it not a pain to us that his ordinances should be contemned? And should we not then wish the day when the rebels to his throne and government, when the despisers of his grace and gospel shall be changed, and divinely renewed by the influences of his grace? Or, if they will continue obstinate and incorrigible, when they shall know and confess that CHRIST is King of kings and Lord of lords, and their King and their LORD, by the thunder of his power? Certain it is, that true friendship will unite our hearts, and with honour and blessing to each other: certainly then the true friends of CHRIST cannot but wish that he may be glorified in this very world, where he has been set at nought and despised. They will wish that he may plant the standard of his glory and triumph in that earth where once was erected the cross of his public shame and excruciating sorrow.

2. True believers wish that JESUS CHRIST may come, in order to put an end to pain and sorrow. Pain and sorrow, with what an uncontrollable and universal sway do they reign in our world? The wound that was inflicted upon our natures at our first apostasy, has been kept open and bleeding on through all generations; and when we take a view of mankind what misery and wretchedness from all quarters meet our eyes, and affect our hearts? Here and

the great capital calamities, the first-born of death, and the expeditious, remorseless, and general disturbers and destroyers of our race; I mean tempest, earthquake, famine, pestilence, and violent and outrageous persecution, and war? Nor are there only these greater calamities, that as with an enormous scythe lay waste whole cities and kingdoms at once, but there are smaller mischiefs that harass and afflict us; I mean the dreadful train of common diseases, such as fever, dropy, consumption, colic, stone, and the like, from which no city or town it may be is ever entirely free, and which oftentimes usurp, as it were, the scythe from the delaying hands of Time, and bring us to an untimely grave, even in the very bloom or strength of our constitutions? What is the world become through sin? What but a Bedlam for madness, I mean the madness of the soul, and an hospital for disease, the disease of our bodies? Add to all this, that pain and sorrow have still a wider spread in our world from the ten thousand vexations and disappointments of the present state. We enter upon life as mariners launch, it may be, upon a sea all smooth and serene, and glittering with a bright variety of pleasing colours and tempting charms, but anon the skies darken, the winds arise, the clouds gather, the billows roll, and sorrow and pain pour in upon us in an huge and boisterous torrent, from the falseness of pretended friends, from the subtilty, power, and malice of inveterate and cruel enemies,

mies, from the loss of our tender relatives, our loving and beloved acquaintance, the very *Jonathans* of our souls, and from the disappointments, crosses, and troubles, which more or less overspread human life, disturb its pleasures, and turn our calm and sunshine into the horrors and darkness of disquietude and anguish, if not of despondency and despair. More than all this, we find, if we are true christians, pains and sorrows, as well as pleasures and joys, peculiar to ourselves. These lukewarm, earthly, formal, frozen spirits of ours, so ready to start aside from God and our best interests; the languor, darkness, deadness which we feel within; our alienation from God, our partial aversion at least to his holy communion, and holy commandments and ordinances, this is no small cause of our pain and sorrow, and we mingle complaints with the Apostle, that we "see another law in our members, warring against the law of our minds, and bringing us," or at least striving to bring us "into captivity to the law of sin which is in our members:" and we are often crying out with him, "O wretched men that we are, who shall deliver us from the body of this death (x)!" Such and so various and complicated are the pains and sorrows of the present state; but they shall be all ended at the second coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. As the first *Adam* is the author of them, so the second *Adam* shall be their finisher. When our LORD comes,

(x) Rom. vii. 23, 24.

comes, "GOD shall wipe away all tears from
 "our eyes," from what causes soever they flow-
 ed, "and there shall be no more sorrow nor
 "crying, neither shall there be any more pain,
 "for the former things are passed away. And
 "he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I
 "make all things new (y)." There shall be no
 more pains and sorrows from cruel enemies and
 violent persecutions; no more pains and sorrows
 from frail and distempered, tempting and en-
 snaring bodies; no more pains and sorrows from
 sinful and impure minds, minds that are part
 alive and part dead, part holy to the LORD, and
 part corrupted and contaminated with sin. A
 disappointing and delusive world shall no more
 flatter us with its smiles, entangle us with its
 snares, or raise our hopes, and then plunge them
 down into ruin and despair. But all these springs
 of sorrow and pain shall be for ever dried up,
 and the fountains of eternal life and blessedness
 be opened and run for ever. "No lion," in the
 new *Jerusalem*, "shall be there, nor any rave-
 nous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not
 "be found there, but the redeemed shall
 "walk there. And the ransomed of the LORD
 "shall return, and come to *Zion*, with songs
 "and everlasting joy upon their heads, they
 "shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow
 "and sighing shall flee away. The inhabi-
 tant above shall no more complain that he is
 "sick (z)." CHRIST JESUS "shall change our
 K 3 vile

(y) Rev. xxi. 4, 5. (z) *Isaiah* xxxv. 9. and xxxiii. 24.

“ vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like
 “ unto his glorious body, according to the work-
 “ ing whereby he is able to subdue all things
 “ unto himself (a). What was sown in disho-
 “ nour shall be raised in glory, and what was
 “ sown in weakness shall be raised in power (b).”

Our spirits shall at the coming of our LORD
 be perfect in holiness, and there shall not be
 the least stain or deformity of sin upon them.

“ That which is perfect shall then be fully
 “ come, and that which is in part shall be done
 “ away (c).” Our hearts, our depraved hearts,

which here gave us so much pain, shall in the
 day of CHRIST's second coming feel themselves
 whole and well. The dislocated and disjointed

powers of the soul shall then be entirely harmo-
 nious, and enjoy perfect rest. The world shall

no more trouble us, we shall have got beyond
 its sphere and influence, nay, we shall shout its
 dissolution in acclamations and praises. Sorrow

and pain, like their great author *Satan*, shall be
 bound up and chained, and confined to their na-
 tive dungeon, the pit of hell; and all that escape

its dreadful regions, which shall be the happy
 lot of every saint, shall be out of their reach,
 and beyond either their experience, or so much

as their least fearful apprehension for ever and
 ever. “ Therefore are they,” the saints of God,

“ before the throne of God, and serve him day

“ and night in his temple, and he that sits on

“ the throne shall dwell among them. They

“ shall

(a) Phil. iii. 21. (b) 1 Cor. xv. 43. (c) 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

" shall hunger no more, neither thirst any
 " more, neither shall the sun light on them,
 " nor any heat, for the LAMB which is in
 " the midst of the throne shall feed them,
 " and shall lead them unto living fountains
 " of waters (*d*) ;" waters of joy, of pure and
 perfect joy, without a dreg to pollute them,
 or a tincture of sorrow to embitter them. And
 it is again told us, that the Apostle *John* was
 shown " a pure river of water and life, clear as
 " crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God,
 " and of the LAMB. In the midst of the street
 " of it, of the new *Jerusalem*, and on either side
 " of the river was there the tree of life, which
 " bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her
 " fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree
 " were for the healing of the nations. And
 " there shall be no more curse, but the throne
 " of God and the LAMB shall be in it, and his
 " servants shall serve him. And they shall see
 " his face, and his name shall be on their fore-
 " heads. And there shall be no night there, and
 " they need no candle, neither light of the
 " sun, for the LORD GOD gives them light,
 " and they shall reign for ever and ever (*e*)."
 And now, shall there be this end to pain and
 sorrow at CHRIST's second coming? Shall they
 which have shot their last stings, and spent their
 venom as to every particular saint at the time of
 his dissolution and entrance into glory, have their
 funerals, as it were, publicly solemnized at

K 4

CHRIST'S

(*d*) Rev. vii. 15.(*e*) Rev. xxii. 1—5.

CHRIST'S second coming, then what reason have true believers in JESUS CHRIST to say, in answer to their LORD when he declares, "Surely I come quickly? *Amen*. Even so, come, LORD JESUS." How should the chorus of saints *militant* join with the chorus of saints *triumphant*, and say, with one heart and voice, "Come, LORD JESUS," "come in thy glories, in the glories of thy power and grace; for pain and sorrow shall flee away at the brightness of thy coming, as the shadows of the night flee away before the rising sun!" I add,

3. That another reason why true believers may wish for the second coming of CHRIST may be because he will at his coming finish the reign of death. Death has had a long reign in our world. He rode forth, as it were, "conquering, and to conquer," in the curse denounced upon *Adam*, after the original transgression, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return (*f*)."
And he has ever since had an unrestrained career, and maintained a sovereign and unbounded dominion in our world. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, in that all have sinned (*g*). In *Adam* all die (*h*). What man is he that lives and shall not see death (*i*)?" There is no discharge in this war (*k*), and in it death is sure to be victor, and every son and daughter of *Adam* is given to him for a time as his

(*f*) Gen. iii. 19.(*g*) Rom. v. 12.(*h*) 1 Cor. xv. 22.(*i*) Psal. lxxxix. 48.(*k*) Eccl. viii. 8.

his lawful prey. But when JESUS comes the second time, *Death* itself shall *die*. The LORD of life will put an end to the rule and ravage of death, as certainly as light dispels darkness, or as the blooming progress of the spring concludes the dreary comfortless reign of winter. CHRIST comes, as has been shown at large in the last discourse, to raise the dead from their graves. Death has not grasped a captive so strongly, nor held him in his bonds so long, as to be able to resist the call of that JESUS, who shall demand him at his hands, and make the dreadful tyrant as easily refund his prey, as the mighty hero vanquishes the feeble child, or tramples under his feet the feebler insect. As the harbingers and pioneers of death, pain and sorrow, shall all be destroyed at CHRIST's second coming, so the gloomy prince on whom they attended, and whose work they made ready to his hands, shall be destroyed with them. "And there shall be no more death (1). This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory : O death ! where is thy sting ? O grave ! where is thy victory ? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law ; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through
" our

(1) Rev. xxi. 4.

"our LORD JESUS CHRIST (*m*). " How dismal and distressing is the reign of death at present ! What havock does he make in a few years in our world ! How many of our dear relatives, the brethren of our flesh, and of our friends, the brethren of our souls, have fallen victims to the power of this great and general destroyer ? And we ourselves must soon expect to feel the stroke of this " king of terrors." When his arrows are flying abroad, so thick, so frequent, sometimes *dropping before us* on persons older, and sometimes *falling behind us* on persons younger than ourselves, sometimes smiting the partner of our lives, the parents of our flesh, the children of our delight, the friends of our bosom on our *right-hand*, and sometimes destroying the stranger or the enemy as on our *left-hand*, what folly would it be in us to expect that we shall stand long unhurt, and much more that we should stand always ? Nay we ourselves have felt, and, it may be, now feel the principles and powers of death working within us. We may literally say that we are " dying daily. In the " midst of life we are in death." Death has sent us the heralds of his approach, and we hear the found of his feet, and the sharpning of his dart, in every disease and pain, in every infirmity and decay that we feel. We must ere long pay, as others have done, the debt of nature, or rather the debt of sin. " It is appointed to all men once " to die (*n*). And man that is born of a wo-

" man

(*m*) 1 Cor. xv. 53—57.(*n*) Heb. ix. 27.

“ man is of few days, and full of trouble. He
 “ comes forth like a flower, and is cut down ;
 “ he flees also as a shadow, and continueth
 “ not(*o*).” But when CHRIST comes, death shall
 be no more. His prison, the grave, shall then be
 broken up ; and his chains, powerful as they
 may be, shall all be burst asunder. “ Because
 “ CHRIST lives, his people shall live also.” They
 shall live, not only as to their souls, which never
 did nor could fall under his power, but they
 shall live as to their bodies ; live so as to die no
 more. “ I am the resurrection and the life,”
 says our blessed LORD, “ he that believes on
 “ me, though he were dead, yet shall he live,
 “ and whosoever lives and believes in me, shall
 “ never die(*p*).” And now what reason have
 the faints of GOD, the true believers in JESUS
 CHRIST, to answer the declaration of our LORD,
 “ Surely I come quickly,” with an “ *Amen*, even
 “ so, come LORD JESUS ;” since death shall then
 have an end put to his dominion ? Here they
 feared death, and though they had a sight by
 faith of the glorious and blisful shores beyond
 it, yet they could not help startling and trem-
 bling at the cold stream they must pass through
 to reach them, nay, even in heaven, when their
 spirits were happy with their GOD and SAVI-
 OUR, they did not find their full selves. Part
 was left behind under the power of death in
 silence, dishonour, and dust, and they were not
 in their whole selves in the enjoyment of bles-
 sedness,

(*o*) Job xiv. 1, 2.(*p*) John xi. 25.

fedness, but when CHRIST comes, death ends all his dominion, and both body and soul shall henceforward "be for ever with the LORD." Grace shall "now reign unto eternal life" in the complete blessedness of the soul, and in the glorious restitution and immortal vigour of the body. This consideration leads me,

4. And lastly, to observe, That another reason why true believers in JESUS CHRIST may wish for his second coming may be taken from the great glory, and the consummation of their felicity, which they shall then obtain.

They are acknowledged, approved, and welcomed as the children of GOD, and the brethren and "joint-heirs with JESUS CHRIST;" there is now a period put to every pain and sorrow, and death shall have no more dominion over them, and as their positive felicity, joy without measure and without end, in the presence and fruition of GOD and the LAMB lies before them, and ages appear rolling on after ages in the immense eternity all bright in glory, and rich in blessing; nor is there any possible fear that they shall ever fail, or that their blessed possessors shall ever be removed away from them. Now will the saints be all that which their GOD would have them be, and now shall they enjoy all that which they could desire to enjoy. Every want is filled up. Every faculty has its fruition. "In their FATHER's house there is provision enough, and to spare," and to this house they shall arrive at our LORD's second coming, and there

there shall they dwell and go no more forth. Faith is now turned into sight, hope into enjoyment, patience into possession, and love, holiness, and joy beam without a cloud, shine without a stain, and flow on in streams full and immaculate for ever and ever. Can we then wonder that when our LORD says, "Surely, I come quickly," his people should return their *Amen*, and say, "Even so, come LORD JESUS?"

Thus have I enquired into the Answer of the Apostle *John*, or rather of the Church, "*Amen*. "Even so, come LORD JESUS." What remains is some Improvement of what has been said. And,

I. Let our thoughts dwell upon this great and glorious subject. Thoughts, the offspring of that rational, high-descended, and immortal Being, the soul, upon what should they fix? Surely not for a constancy or a long continuance on any thing below their native quarry. They should always remember whose natives they are, and from whence the soul that gives them birth owed its existence, and how high it stands in the scale of Being; and the objects upon which they dwell should be proportioned to the dignity and sublimity of their extraction. Why should the fleeting vapours of human applause, the low dust of avarice, the trash of worldly cares, and much less the dregs of sensual impurity, attach and fasten the affections of our minds upon them,

them, while the grand solemnities and divine realities, upon which we have been discoursing, are shut out from our minds, or only transiently touch and glance upon the surface, when they should sink to the very depth of our souls, and take up their perpetual residence there? The second coming of our LORD, his coming to be glorified in our world, and to purge off every scar of his humiliation and shame; his second coming to put an utter end to the reign, and even to the existence of pain and sorrow, as to his saints; his second coming to abolish death, and inspire immortal life and vigour into the sleeping ashes of his people; and his second coming to consummate the glory and felicity of all such who believe upon him, and obey him; let this second coming of our LORD in its high intentions and most happy consequences, be the inexhaustible subject of our meditations. Even the very make of our bodies themselves, though our inferior part, shows us that we are not to grovel upon earth, but to view and contemplate our kindred skies †, and shall not our souls stretch their pinions from this world, and its vain scenes, and look, “not to the things which
“ are

† *Pronaque cum spectent animalia cætera terram,
Os homini sublime dedit : cælumque tueri
Jussit, & erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.*

Ovid. Metam. lib. 1. l. 85.

While other creatures grov'ling bend to earth,
God gave to man to lift his front sublime,
And range the ample circuit of the skies.

In

“ are seen, which are only temporal, but to the
 “ things which are not seen, and which are
 “ eternal (q).” As “ risen with CHRIST, let
 “ us seek those things which are above, where
 “ CHRIST sitteth on the right-hand of GOD.
 “ Let us set our affections on things above, not
 “ on things on the earth. For we are dead,”
 dead by our holy profession and our heavenly
 hopes, to this world, and more especially to sin,
 great part of which lies in an undue inordinate
 affection to the world, “ and our life is hid with
 “ CHRIST in GOD; for when CHRIST, who is
 “ our life, shall appear, then shall we also ap-
 “ pear with him in glory (r).” O! for the tele-
 scope of faith to be often lifted up to explore not
 only “ the land that is now afar off,” but the
 coming of the prince of it in all his glory, and
 for the important purposes which have been re-
 presented! Let us see the heavens opening to
 give him a passage into our earth, the solemn
 state of his majestic person, the bright armies of
 the skies in attendance upon him to augment
 the glory of his coming, and to perform his
 will. Let us hear by faith the trumpet blown,
 “ Arise, ye dead,” and the earth and sea at the
 al-

In like manner Cicero says, *Nam cum cæteras animantes abjecisset ad pastum, solum Hominem erexit, ad cœlique quasi cognationis & domicilii pristini conspectum excitavit.*—*De Naturâ Deorum*, lib. 2. For when God had appointed other animals to graze the ground for pasture, he only erected Man, and hereby excited him to survey the heavens, as akin to them, and as his original residence.

(q) 2 Cor. iv. 18.

(r) Col. iii. 1—4.

almighty call obeying the summons, and delivering up their prisoners to appear in one vast congregation before their final Judge. Let us behold "the judgment set, and the books opened;" let us hear the decisive sentence and the final award of good and bad to their different abodes, and behold the earth dissolving in flames, "the elements melting with fervent heat", and "the wicked going away into everlasting punishment, while the righteous enter upon life eternal." Here is scope for our unbounded thought: here are subjects suited to our highest and largest capacities, and both reason and revelation will approve the employment of our souls upon such important and interesting, such awful and delightful themes. O that there might not be one day, in which contemplations upon these great events are not familiar to us! Every morning we rise let us think of the morning of the resurrection, and every night we lie down to rest, let us think of the long night that will be spread over all human and terrestrial things, and the sure end that will be put to them at the coming of our LORD. And GOD grant that we may in our meditations upon these great and amazing subjects be enabled and assisted, through the operation of his SPIRIT, as a Sanctifier and Comforter upon our hearts, to drop all the terror in them, as what has no relation to ourselves, and to embrace all the joys of them, as our own appropriate inheritance and portion; then, and not till then, shall we be prepared to an-

answer to our LORD's declaration, "Behold, I
" come quickly: *Amen.* Even so, come LORD
" JESUS."

II. What a poor portion have those souls,
who have no interest in the blessedness and glo-
ries of this day! To be excluded from a lot and
portion in the honours and happiness conferred
upon the children of GOD, and the redeemed of
the LAMB, at his second coming, and to be
consigned over to the miseries of endless perdi-
tion, with "the devil and his angels; to dwell
with devouring flames and everlasting burnings,"
what a fearful end is here? And if this be the
end of sinners, finally impenitent and unbeliev-
ing sinners, then what avail all their present
worldly possessions, their titles of honour, their
plumes of ambition, and all the luxuries and de-
lights of sense? The end, "the end is coming:"
all this sun-shine will close in the horrors of
everlasting darkness, and all these flattering gales
and smooth streams of prosperity will issue in
the lake of torment, and utter and infinite de-
spair. What a dagger was plunged into the
heart of the rich man in hell in that speech of
Abraham to him, "Son, remember that thou in
" thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and
" likewise *Lazarus* evil things; but now he is
" comforted, and thou art tormented (s)?" Sin-
ners, though on thrones and in palaces, though
on the very pinnacle of pride and power, or in
L the

(s) Luke xvi. 25.

the unbounded range and enjoyment of sensual gratifications and pleasures, are so far from being the objects of envy, if we duly consider their case, that, on the other hand, they are objects that call for our tenderest pity. What are they other than victims hung round with garlands for sacrifice, or malefactors passing through flowery meads, and in splendid chariots to the place of execution? "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou castedst them down into destruction! How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream, when one awakes, so, O LORD, when thou awakest, thou wilt despise their image (t)." A poor lot indeed, to fare sumptuously every day on earth, and to fare miserably for ever in hell! To have a few fleeting moments of enjoyment, and to spend an eternity in pains and sorrows! O that sinners would but lay these awful truths to heart! "O that they were wise, that they understood these things, and that they would consider their latter end (u)!"

III. What a rich and satisfying portion have they who shall have a share in the blessedness and glories of our LORD's second coming! Howsoever low and mean their condition may be as to this world; howsoever they may be traduced, maligned, and oppressed by the proud and cruel potentates and tyrants of the earth, that in

(t) Psalm lxxiii. 18.

(u) Deut. xxxii. 29.

the vast ocean of mankind act like the mighty monsters of the deep, and seem to think that the weaker and smaller fry were given them to be their prey, or the sport of their despotic and barbarous power and rage, yet such souls as these, who may suffer such things in our world, and may be accounted and treated as the offscouring of our race, and as not worthy of a place, and much less of common respect among mankind, these I say, even these are the truly happy persons, as they have at present an interest in the love of CHRIST, and shall bear their part at last in the honours and happiness of his second appearance. "The glory that shall be revealed" in and upon them at the REDEEMER'S coming will purge off all the shame that they may at present endure, and the felicity they shall then enjoy in body and soul shall swallow up all the little transient griefs of the present life, as the ocean swallows up the streams or rivers that run into it, and even transforms their natures into a likeness to itself. This is certain, that no sinner, however high and great, rich and affluent, can be stiled happy: he walks but at best "in a vain show," and death will dissolve the glittering phantom of his happiness, and our LORD at his coming will not only award him to endless misery, but execute the tremendous doom upon him in its full energy of vengeance. And it is as certain that no saint, however poor, and despised, and afflicted, and seemingly wretched as to this world, can be said

to be really and truly miserable, for death will begin, our LORD's coming will ratify, and heaven itself, in the blessedness of soul and body for ever, will consummate and secure his felicity. He may rejoice in the greatest tribulations, and say with holy *David*, "The LORD is the
 " portion of my inheritance, and of my cup:
 " he maintains my lot. The lines are fallen
 " to me in pleasant places: yea, I have a good-
 " ly heritage (x)." And he may make the ex-
 ultations of another Psalmist his own: "Ne-
 " vertheless I am continually with thee; thou
 " hast holden me by my right-hand. Thou
 " shalt guide me with thy counsel, and after-
 " wards receive me to glory. Whom have I in
 " heaven but thee? and there is none upon
 " earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and
 " my heart fail, but GOD is the strength of
 " my heart, and my portion for ever (y)." Cottages may resound, nay even gallies, and dungeons, and chains, and fires, and gibbets may resound with the songs of praise and thanksgiving to GOD from his saints, such as are washed in the REDEEMER's blood, such as are sanctified by divine grace, and such as are made the
 " heirs according to the hope of eternal life:" and reason and religion will give a sanction to the joy, for it is the voice not of enthusiasm and folly, but the voice of sober, well-instructed judgment, and divinely-established faith and
 con-

(x) Psalm xvi. 5, 6.

(y) Psalm lxxiii. 23—26.

confidence. Thus did *Paul* and *Silas* with their backs bleeding, it may be, with the recent scourge, shut up "in the inner prison," and with "their feet made fast in the stocks, pray "and sing praises to God," and startle the ear of midnight, gloomy and melancholy as it was, with their sudden shouts of triumphant joy (z). And thus did the same Apostle *Paul*, when in the near view of his martyrdom, declare that he had "fought a good fight, that he had finished his course; that he had kept the faith, "and that henceforth there was laid up for "him a crown of righteousness, which the "LORD the righteous Judge would give him "at that day, and not to him only, but to all "them that love his appearing (a)." Christians fetch your consolations beforehand by faith from the second coming of your LORD JESUS CHRIST, and having this blessed scene, in which you will be so gloriously distinguished and eternally blessed, in prospect, do not sink in the manner which others do under your present afflictions, however many and great they may be, but "possess your souls in patience," and take down your harps from the willows, as you have so much reason to do it, and attempt "the songs of *Zion* in this strange land. You "are the blessed of the LORD, who made heaven and earth; yea, and you shall be blessed. "Living and dying," here and hereafter, "you
L 3 "are

(z) Acts. xvi. 23—25. (a) 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

(b) 1 Pet. i. 7.

"are the LORD'S:" your souls are bound up with him in the bundle of life, and "he will" assuredly "keep what you have committed to" "him against that day," and then shall your "souls be found," and your graces be found, however they may be both suffering in the furnace now, "unto praise and glory and honour, "even at the appearance of JESUS CHRIST (b)." I add,

IV. And lastly, Let us give all diligence that we may be prepared for the second coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. Let us keep this solemn day in our continual view, and let none of the buzzing vanities of this life be ever suffered to intercept its prospect, or obscure and diminish its glories. And at the same time that we contemplate it, let us be getting ready for it. Let us be concerned that our corruptions may be more and more lessened and abated, and that our graces may be more and more exercised and strengthened. None shall appear with acceptance before CHRIST at last, but such as are "partakers of his SPIRIT," and are formed into his image; and the nearer and brighter our resemblance and conformity to him, the better grounds we have to conclude, that we are indeed interested in CHRIST, and that he will in that day acknowledge us and receive us into his glory; and indeed by how much the greater our attainments in holiness are now, the

(b) 1 Peter i. 7.

the brighter will be our crown in the day of the LORD. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST (c)." And again, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for, and hasting to the coming of the day of GOD (d)?" It is worth the whole labour of life, to be well prepared, and suitably arrayed, for death, judgment, and eternity. "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things," all the miseries which will certainly come upon the wicked, "and to stand before the SON of MAN (e)."

(c) 2 Peter i. 10, 11.

(d) 2 Peter iii. 11, 12.

(e) Luke xxi. 36.



*An HYMN, suited to the foregoing
Sermon.*

I.

"**B**EHOLD I come"—the Saviour cries,
"No more my chariot-wheels delay."
"Come, blessed LORD," thy Church replies,
"Our wishes meet thee on the way."

L 4

II.

II.

Once where thy cross inglorious stood,
The scorn and scandal of the world,
Behold the standard of our God
In radiant majesty unfurl'd.

III.

The saints survey with sweet surprise
Thy glorious sign : the rebel-crew
From the dread vision turn their eyes,
And tremble for the vengeance due.

IV.

Before our God consuming pain
And weeping griefs shall flee away ;
Ev'n Death himself shall close his reign,
Ungrasping his unnumber'd prey.

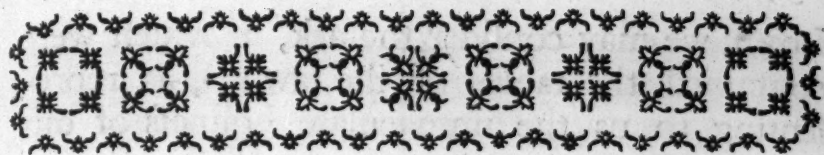
V.

Then shall our bodies, fair and strong,
And fashion'd like the SAVIOUR's, rise,
Mix with the bright celestial throng,
And climb with them th' eternal skies.

VI.

Then life, and love, and peace, and praise,
Shall in immortal union join.
LORD, to that world our spirits raise,
And grant a glimpse of bliss divine !

SERMON



S E R M O N VII*.

The blessing of GOD upon his priests
and people.



P S A L M CXXXII. 16.

*I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her
saints shall shout aloud for joy.*

 HIS psalm we may consider as a
psalm of solemn devotion and grate-
ful praise, upon the account of the
ark of GOD, the symbol of the di-
vine presence; and perhaps we may not go too
far, if we add, the sacred and standing pledge
of the incarnate MESSIAH, "in whom dwelt the
"fulness of the GODHEAD bodily (*f*);" or ra-
ther, if we take the tabernacle and temple, with
all their furniture, as a type of our incarnate
LORD,

* Preached at the Settlement of the Rev. Mr ELIAS ATKINS, at
Newport in the Isle of Wight, July 10, 1760.

(*f*) Col. ii. 9.

LORD, we may consider the ark, in which were contained the tables of the law (g), as representing to us the immaculate holiness of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, or the great purpose and end of his incarnation, the honour and fulfilment of the divine law, according as it is said of him, "that the law of GOD was within " his heart (b)." And may we not add, that as the mercy-seat was placed over the ark, and as the ark was the repository of the law, we may hence learn that divine mercy communicates itself to our world, not with any violation or infringement of the law of GOD, but as enthroned upon its basis, and in a perfect harmony with its awful demands, according to the observation of the Apostle Paul, " GOD is just, " and the justifier of him who believes in JESUS (i)."

As to the time when or the occasion upon which this psalm was penned I shall not particularly enquire : perhaps their sentiments may stand fairest for truth, who think that Solomon was the inspired writer, and the rather as the concluding verses of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple are not only for matter, but also for expression, nearly the same with some passages in the psalm before us. " Now therefore arise, O LORD GOD, into thy resting-place, " thou and the ark of thy strength ; let thy " priests, O LORD GOD, be clothed with salvation, " on,

(g) Deut. x. 5. Heb. ix. 4.

(b) Psalm xl. 8.

(i) Rom. iii. 26.

“on, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness (k).” And what can be supposed more suitable than for *Solomon* to say upon the settlement of the ark in the temple, as in the 10th and 11th verses of our psalm, “For thy servant *David*’s sake turn not away the face of thine Anointed. The LORD hath sworn in truth unto *David*, he will not turn from it, of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne;” and accordingly *Solomon* takes special notice of this promise at the dedication of the temple. “The LORD therefore,” says he, “hath performed his word that he hath spoken, for I am risen up in the room of *David* my father, and am set on the throne of *Israel*, as the LORD promised, and have built the house for the name of the LORD God of *Israel* (l).”

What will be the subject of our present meditations is the gracious promise, “I will also clothe her priests,” the priests of *Zion*, “with salvation; and her saints,” the saints of *Zion*, “shall shout aloud for joy.” By *Zion*, in its literal sense, we are to understand the celebrated Mount *Zion*, the southern or principal part of *Jerusalem*, on which stood the city of *David*, and in that city the royal palace, as also the ark of the LORD in the midst of the tabernacle or tent that *David* there pitched for it. On this last account it is, that this hill is frequently stiled in the book of *Psalms*, “the holy hill,” and by way of excellency the said hill is used in scrip-

(k) 2Chron. vi. 41.

(l) 2 Chron. vi. 10.

scripture to denote the whole city of *Jerusalem*, and consequently Mount *Moriah*, whereon the temple of *Solomon* was built, and whither the ark of the LORD was afterwards removed*. So that this hill, thus dignified and honoured with the special symbols of the presence of GOD, became his seat or residence here below: here was his oracle, here his priests were to attend and discharge their holy functions; and here the tribes of *Israel* were to worship, and expect the favour and blessing of their covenant-GOD upon them. And accordingly GOD here engages, that he would "clothe her priests," the priests of *Zion*, "with salvation," and that "her saints," the saints of *Zion*, should "shout aloud for joy."

In treating upon the passage, I shall,

- I. Consider whom we are to understand by the priests.
- II. I shall examine the promise here made concerning them. "I will also clothe her priests with salvation."
- III. I shall enquire whom we are to understand by the saints here mentioned.
- IV. I shall consider the mercy which GOD here promises to his saints. "And her saints shall shout aloud for joy."
- V. And lastly, I shall represent our duty in the possession of such a gracious promise,

as

* See *Well's*'s Geography, Vol. III. page 76.

as that God "will clothe her priests," the priests of Zion, "with salvation, and that "her saints shall shout aloud for joy."

I. Let us consider whom we are to understand by the priests. "I will also clothe her priests," the priests of Zion, "with salvation." The word here rendered *priests*, in general signifies *ministers*. By minister in scripture we are sometimes to understand the prime minister of a kingdom, or the person next in dignity or in the power of administration to the sovereign, and sometimes we are to understand the priests, or those holy persons who were sanctified and appointed by God to *minister* to him in his tabernacle or temple, to make their solemn approaches to him, and to present before him the gifts and sacrifices of the people*, with various other services, to which

* The very word כהן, says the very learned and elegant *Wit-*
'*fus*, signifies a minister next to the king; and as kings, adds he,
'are of two sorts, some earthly, and one heavenly, who is the LORD
'of the universe, so both have their ministers. Thus the sons of
'David are called, according to the original, *Ministers*, 2 Samuel
'viii. 18. that is, first or chief at the hand of the King, 1 Chron.
'xviii. 17. So Ira the Jairite is called, according to the original,
'minister of David, 2 Samuel xx. 26. Now the King of heaven
'will have his ministers to attend him, and accordingly he gave di-
'rections, when he appointed the priesthood, that Aaron and his
'sons should be anointed and consecrated, that they might *minister*
'to him in the priest's office.'

כהן significat ministrum regi proximum. Porro quum reges sint in
'duplice differentia, alii terrestres, unus cælestis, qui Rex totius universi
'est, utrique habent suos כהנים cohanim, ministros. Sic filii Davi-
'dis cohanim dicuntur, 2 Sam. viii. 18. Id est primum ad manum Re-
'gis, uti exponitur 1 Chron. xviii. 17. Eadem mente Hiram Jairitis
'vocatur princeps minister Davidis, 2 Sam. xx. 26. Sed & Rex cæ-

which the GOD of *Israel* ordained them; such as instructing the people, offering up holy incense for them, blessing them in the name of the LORD, &c. Among these priests there was one who was chief, who was called the High-priest, and who was distinguished above the rest, not only by a much nobler dress, but especially by the high privilege allowed him of entering into the Holy of holies once in the year on the great day of expiation (*m*). These are the priests intended in our text, as to whom the promise is made, "I will also clothe her priests," the priests of *Zion*, "with salvation." True it is, that this order of men belonged only to the *Mosaic* dispensation; and as our LORD JESUS CHRIST took down the whole frame of the ceremonial law, and laid it aside, so of course the priesthood that belonged to it was to have no longer continuance. But notwithstanding all this there is a priesthood kept up in our world. To christians it may be truly said, "Ye are a royal priesthood (*n*). CHRIST hath made us Kings and Priests unto GOD and his FATHER (*o*). And by CHRIST we are to offer the sacrifice of praise unto GOD continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name (*p*)." Nay, we as priests are to offer up our bodies as sacrifices to

"*lestis suis instructus ministris voluit: de quibus dixit, Exod. xxx. 30.*
 "*Et sanctificabis eos, ut ministrant mihi.*" Witfii Miscellanea sacra,
 lib. IV. diff. 2. § 70.

(*m*) Lev. xvi.

(*n*) 1 Peter ii. 9.

(*o*) Rev. i. 6.

(*p*) Heb. xiii. 15.

to the LORD. "I beseech you therefore, brethren,
 " by the mercies of GOD, that you present your
 " bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto
 " GOD, which is your reasonable service (q)." But though christians in general may be called priests, and all the LORD's people in this sense are holy unto him, yet methinks the preachers of the word in a special and eminent sense may be stiled *priests*, or if you please to carry on the parallel between the times of the law and those of the gospel, the people of GOD shall be termed the priests, and ministers the high-priests, as special services are required from them more than from others, as well as greater honours are conferred upon them. Are all christians the priests of the Most High GOD? Are all christians to admonish and instruct as far as their opportunities give leave, and their provinces extend? More especially is this the work of the ministers of the gospel. They are "to give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word (r); to be instant in season, and out of season, to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine (s); and they are to teach publicly, and from house to house (t)." Ministers should consider themselves (such holiness should dwell upon their hearts, and so ready should they be to impart it in their conversations) as engaged all their lives in a kind of uninterrupted Sermon; at least,

(q) Rom. xii. 1.

(r) Acts vi. 4.

(s) 2 Tim. iv. 2.

(t) Acts xx. 20.

least, very small should be the spaces of time between instruction and instruction, either of one sort or in one form or another. Again, are all the saints of GOD priests, in that they offer up prayers to GOD? More especially is prayer the duty of ministers: prayer should be their business, as praise should be their pleasure. They should preserve a near access to GOD, and an intimate spiritual communion with him, and on GOD's holy day, more especially, they should present one general sacrifice of supplication to the LORD, in behalf of themselves and the churches and congregations among whom they labour. Ministers should be men of prayer: they should be devoted to it, and they should never grow weary of it. Prayer should be the holy incense breathing not only from the temple of GOD, but from their closets, their families, and their peoples houses, and more abundantly from their sick rooms and dying beds. "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him (u)." Further, are all true christians priests, in that they praise and bless the LORD? More especially should ministers abound in this work; this work did I call it? This joy, this fore-taste of heaven, this chief ingredient in the perfect eternal felicity there. The high praises of their God should never die or languish with them, and particularly they should on LORD's-days be much concerned that there may be a divine flame

(u) James v. 14.

flame in their own breasts, in order that its holy ardors may be diffused among others, and that the same sacred temper they possess themselves may run from soul to soul through their people. And O! that for this purpose they were like the priests of old, careful to keep alive, not indeed, like them, a material, but a spiritual inextinguishable fire, with which to consecrate and enliven every duty they perform. Let me add, that ministers above all other persons should be eminent for piety, like as the high-priest under the law bore upon his forehead, extant and legible to the eye, this inscription, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD (x)." Let ministers carry with them the beauty of holiness, where-ever they go, that what they teach with their lips may be illustrated and exemplified in their lives, that they may at once show that they are learners and followers of their divine Master. As ministers are often in the mount of communion with GOD, so let them make it their great concern, that they may carry some rays of the heavenly glory, the resplendency, as it were, of their God upon them into all their affairs and converses with men. And finally, were the priests of old commanded to bless the people, and that in the following devout and sublime strain, "The LORD bless thee, and keep thee; the LORD make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they," the priests,

M

" shall

(x) Exodus xxviii. 36.

“ shall put my name upon the children of *Israel*, and I will bless them (y);” I say, were the priests of old commanded thus to bless the people? Let us all, as christians, as priests of the most merciful and gracious *GOD*, bless each other, and instead of a mutual exchange of evil surmising, ill wishes, backbitings, scoffs, and slanders, let there be a perpetual circulation in the churches of *CHRIST*, of holy desires, tender compassions, and the most cordial love and endearments for each other; but let ministers of *JESUS CHRIST*, the ministers of the Prince of Peace, and the Saviour of sinners, let them above all others abound in blessing. Let their hands, their eyes, their hearts be lifted up in daily petitions to the mercy-seat for their people, and particularly on the days of public worship let them, as it were, “ give *GOD* “ no rest,” by their importunity and fervor, “ till he shall command the blessing” upon their churches and congregations, “ even life for “ evermore.” And let ministers never in a cold, formal, customary manner pronounce that benediction, which, as a kind of holy and divine farewell, closes the public service, “ The grace of “ the *LORD JESUS CHRIST*, and the love of “ *GOD*, and the communion of the *HOLY* “ *GHOST*, be with you all. *Amen* (z).” In this benediction grace and glory, all the mercies of time, and the immense riches of eternity are epitomized.

(y) Numbers vi. 24—27. (z) 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

tomized. All the inexhaustible and everlasting kindness and blessing in FATHER, SON, and SPIRIT, in all their various offices and characters, are here, as it were, collected and centred. And when ministers pronounce such a benediction, how should their hearts earnestly covet, and, as it were, seize and embrace with an holy violence, the blessings they wish for their people, being sincerely and heartily importunate that that GOD who has directed the form of benediction would in his almighty power and boundless love, shower down upon their own hearts, and those of their congregation, every precious mercy it comprehends? And let me beseech likewise the churches and congregations that hear this benediction, to hear it with devotion and reverence, as a most solemn part of the public worship, and as what they should give an *Amen* to with all their souls, since it imports in it the most momentous, desirable, and everlasting mercies. Let it not so much as be imagined, by any seeming haste or hurry to depart, while the benediction is pronouncing, that any are glad the public worship is concluding, and that they are so eager to leave the house of GOD, that they can hardly carry away the sound of the blessing, so little are they concerned about its divine signification, and actual enjoyment.

Having considered whom we are to understand by the priests, I come,

M 2

II. To

II. To examine the promise made concerning them. "I will also clothe her priests
"with salvation."

Here we may take notice of the expression, "I will clothe," and then of the matter of this clothing, and that is "salvation."

1st, We may take notice of the expression, "I will clothe." 'The usual metaphor of being clothed,' says the sagacious Dr *Barrow*, 'does in the sacred dialect denote a complete endowment with, a plentiful enjoyment of, or an entire application to that thing or quality, with which a person is said to be clothed †.' Thus God is said to be "clothed with honour and majesty (a)." So *Job* says, "that he put on righteousness, and it clothed him;" and that "judgment was a robe and a diadem (b)." In like manner the Apostle *Peter* exhorts that we should be "clothed with humility (c)." And the Prophet *Isaiah* introduces, it may be, the gospel-church as saying, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with jewels (d)." And, to mention no more

† *Barrow's Works*, Vol. I. Sermon xii. page 150.

(a) Psalm xciii. 1.

(b) Job xxix. 14.

(c) 1 Peter v. 5.

(d) *Isaiah* lxi. 10.

more passages, it is said concerning the Almighty, that " he put on righteousness as a breast-plate ; and an helmet of salvation upon his head, and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke (e)." From these passages it is very evident, that by this *clothing* is intended a large endowment with, a full possession of, or an entire bent of the mind to whatsoever is said to be the matter of our *clothing* ; and be it observed, that not only the outward appearances or conduct may be signified by *clothing*, but that the internal temper, the inmost resolution of the mind may be designed. So, for instance, to be " clothed with cursing (f)," is to have cursing the complexion of the spirit, as well as the language of the lips. And to " be clothed with shame", verse 18. of our psalm, is undoubtedly to be filled with shame ; shame first seizing the spirit, and then betraying itself in its outward and usual signs in the countenance and behaviour.

2dly, We may observe the matter of this clothing, and that is " salvation" ; by which we may understand either that the priests of *Zion* should be taken under the peculiar protection and safeguard of heaven, or that they should be the ministers of salvation.

1. We may understand by this salvation with which the priests of *Zion* should be clothed, that they should be taken under the peculiar protec-

M 3

tion

(e) Isai. lix. 17.

(f) Psalm cix. 18.

tion and safeguard of heaven. "I will also clothe
 " her priests with salvation;" that is, 'I will
 ' defend them, I will invest them with my sal-
 ' vation, and they shall be so encompassed with
 ' it, that they shall not in any part be left un-
 ' guarded, and exposed to the malice and pow-
 ' er of their adversaries.' And as we consider
 our lives, and that with sufficient ground, under
 the care of our God, so may we not more espe-
 cially consider the lives of ministers as under his
 peculiar protection? "If a sparrow falls not to
 " the ground without our heavenly Father (g)," much less does a minister die, without the ex-
 press warrant of the great Head of the church.
 Not one of "the stars which he holds in his
 " right-hand" in his churches below, ascends
 from thence to shine in its orb of glory above,
 but by his special providence and direction. 'We
 ' are all immortal,' said a good minister, 'till
 ' our work is done.' No stratagems nor power
 of *Satan*, no rage nor policy of enemies, no cross
 accidents (as we are apt to call them, though in
 reality they are heavenly appointments) no poi-
 son of sickness, no kinds of death, innumerable
 as they are, shall ever put an end to our lives,
 till He, who "has the keys of death" and of
 the invisible world, gives the commission. We
 are invulnerable, and are surrounded with an
 invincible armour on all sides, till the Captain
 of our salvation gives orders for our retirement
 from the field of battle, and bids us enter into
 our

(g) Mat. x. 29.

our Master's kingdom and joy, and then indeed we submit to the stroke of death, and put off the body, and leave it behind us, while the soul, like a triumphant conqueror, goes home to its God to receive "the crown of glory which shall never fade away (b)."

2. By the priests of *Zion* being clothed with salvation we may understand that they should be the ministers of salvation. This sense appears to me very easy, and well agrees with the joys of the saints in the latter part of the verse. "I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy." And the priests of *Zion*, the ministers of the LORD, may be said to be clothed with salvation, that is, to possess it, or be possessed by it, when,

[1.] They discover a deep sense of the value of salvation. Who can doubt but that it was very becoming in the priests, and especially in the high-priests under the law, to manifest a deep sense of the deliverances God had wrought for *Israel*, in raising up *Moses*, redeeming his people from the hand of *Pharaoh*, leading them through the wilderness, bringing them into *Canaan*, dissolving the power of their enemies before them, and giving them a quiet and happy settlement in the promised land? And is it not as becoming in the ministers of the gospel to shew a deep sense of the value of the greater salvation by *JESUS CHRIST*, and the wonderful methods which God has taken to rescue sinners from the curse

M 4

and

(b) 1 Peter v. 4.

and slavery of sin and *Satan* by the merits and mediation of his SON, our adorable EMMANUEL; as the blessed consequences of which we have peace and comfort here in our travels through life, and shall ere long arrive at the "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven" (the great anti-type of the earthly *Canaan*) "for us⁽ⁱ⁾?" The salvation by JESUS CHRIST, "the salvation with eternal glory^(k)," as the Apostle styles it, this should be written as in strong, indelible characters upon our hearts. "Because we believe, therefore we should speak^(l)." We should not only have the words of salvation upon our mouths, but we should above all desire that we may feel its vivid influence, and penetrating and transforming efficacy upon our inclinations and affections. Thus shall we be "able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the SPIRIT^(m)."

[2.] The ministers of the LORD may be said to be clothed with salvation, when they largely and particularly enter into the scheme and methods of salvation. The ministers of the gospel have not a slight, narrow, or superficial subject upon which to discourse, but they have a subject of vast compass, most profound depth, and I might say, infinite connection. How becoming then is it, as ministers of salvation, to enter upon it, carefully to investigate it, and try to com-
pre-

(i) 1 Peter i. 4.
(m) 2 Cor. iii. 6.

(k) 2 Timothy ii. 10. (l) 2 Cor. iv. 13.

prehend it ? for though they will not be equal to their subject after all their laborious and holy endeavours, yet they may certainly know more abundantly of it than they could possibly have attained to without these their laudable exertions and efforts. Hence does the Apostle *Paul* speak of our being “ able to comprehend with all “ faints, what is the breadth, and length, and “ depth, and heighth,” and of “ knowing the “ love of CHRIST which passeth knowledge ⁽ⁿ⁾.” How proper and pleasant is it for ministers to trace salvation in its eternal spring, the love of the FATHER, to view it in its wonderful medium, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and to behold it in its condescending and gracious administrator, the blessed SPIRIT ? How suitable and how entertaining for ministers to unfold salvation in its riches of blessing, breaking up from eternity in election as from a full fountain, flowing through time in the mercies of pardon, sanctification, peace, and comfort, and at last enlarging itself as into an immense and bottomless ocean, in the “ fulness of joy in God’s presence, and the ever- “ lasting pleasures at his right-hand ?” In a word, how proper and delightful is it for ministers to display salvation in its freeness and riches, in its security and duration, in its evidences and effects, and thus, as is was said of *John the Baptist*, be “ the prophets of the Highest, to “ give the knowledge of salvation to his people, “ by the remission of their sins, through the “ tender

(n) Eph. ii. 18, 19.

“ tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-
 “ spring from on high hath visited us, to give
 “ light to them that sit in darkness, and in the
 “ shadow of death, to guide our feet in the
 “ way of peace (*p*)?”

[3.] Ministers may be said to be clothed with salvation, when they are unwearied in publishing and diffusing abroad salvation. Then may salvation be said with great propriety to be their *clothing*, when it attends them wheresoever they go, or when it is not worn as the dress of a LORD's day only, but is their perpetual garment. How worthy is it of ministers to preach salvation, not only from their pulpits, but even according to the example of the glorious Apostle St. Paul, “ from house to house (*p*),” and to “ make known the favour of the knowledge of “ CHRIST in every place (*q*)?” How much good has been done by ministers by pious conversation, by familiar catechising, and by personal and particular addresses and applications to souls? And how ought they to gather up even the very fragments of their time for these holy uses, that so nothing may be lost? Are ministers stiled “ sowers (*r*),” let them not only bear a large portion of the divine seed with them in their public and stated seasons of worship, but let them be at no time whatever without an handful of the precious grain, “ never being “ weary” either of well-speaking or “ of well-
 “ doing,

(*p*) Luke i. 76—79. (*p*) Acts xx. 20. (*q*) 2 Cor. ii. 14.

(*r*) Matt. xiii. 3.

“doing, knowing that in due time they shall “reap, if they faint not (s).” Perhaps among the many reasons that might be rendered why there is in general such a mournful aspect as to the interest of vital, powerful, and uniform godliness, there cannot be found one that has proved more pernicious than that of the carnality and negligence of ministers; so that if there has not been a flat contradiction, yet there has been but little similarity between their preaching on the LORD’s day, and the vein of their conversation in the week. These things, my brethren, though they are reproachful to the ministry, yet I am afraid they are too commonly true. GOD grant that none of us may add to the number of such ministers! May we not be like clouds that distil with rain for an hour, and then withhold our influences, but like free and full fountains, ever yielding and ever diffusing abroad our pure and undefiled, our living and refreshing streams, to make glad the cities of our GOD, the tabernacles of the Most High!

[4.] And lastly, Ministers may be said to be clothed with salvation, when their lives are an evidence and display of its power. Salvation, spiritual and eternal salvation, as “the gift of “GOD through JESUS CHRIST,” what mercy is there in it! And what powerful, and, I might say, irresistible obligation is contained in it to all holy obedience! Nay further, one
essential

(s) Gal. vi. 9.

essential part of salvation is a redemption from the power and pollution of sin: "who," that is CHRIST, "gave himself for us, that he might "redeem us from all iniquity (*t*); and we are said to be "saved by the washing of regeneration, "and the renewing of the HOLY GHOST (*u*). Ministers then may be said to be clothed with salvation, when salvation through the whole of their lives appears to have attained its due effect, and to exert its full power, that is, when, having enthroned itself in their hearts, it shines forth in all their behaviour in the amiably venerable beauties and glories of holiness. Then are they "manifestly declared to be the epistles "of CHRIST (*x*). Then do they "shine as "lights in the world, holding forth the word "of life (*y*). The life of CHRIST is made manifest in their mortal flesh (*z*). Their people not only hear salvation from their lips, but they see it in their lives. They "adorn the doctrine of God their SAVIOUR in all things (*a*). They are clothed with salvation, and their clothing is so pure and bright, so costly and majestic, that all who see it must acknowledge it to be the very texture of heaven, and the same array for kind which holy angels and saints made perfect wear. What these holy ministers, these ministers of salvation feel, that they speak; what they speak, that they live; and there is an uniformity of design and end in the whole of their preaching,

con-

(*t*) Titus ii. 14.(*u*) Tit. iii. 5.(*x*) 2 Cor. iii. 3.(*y*) Phil. ii. 15, 16.(*z*) 2 Cor. iv. 11.(*a*) Titus ii. 10.

converse, and conduct, namely, that God may be glorified, and souls profited and eternally saved. Happy ministers that can truly say as the Apostle *Paul*, "Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do, and the God of peace shall be with you (b)!" I proceed,

III. To enquire whom we are to understand by the saints here mentioned. "I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy." By the saints here, though the word may be applied even to the priests themselves, we may understand the people of God in general, such as are holy and pious, not only by a sacred profession, but in heart and truth. God has had a people to serve him from one generation to another. Amidst the general mass of corruption, there have been some souls that have possessed a divine favour, and have been like the salt of the earth. Wide has been the ruin, and dreadful the wreck of our natures, but God has gathered thence some "vessels of mercy," whom he has "prepared for glory." There have been saints and servants of God in former ages, and, blessed be God, there are some still to be found, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, and a peculiar people, to shew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light(c)." The standard

(b) Phil. iv. 9.

(c) 1 Peter ii. 9.

standard of CHRIST is not a forsaken standard. Still there are souls that are flying from the camp of sin and *Satan* to lift under the REDEEMER, and become his "willing people in the day of his power (*d*). More than the womb of the morning," for so we may render the passage, is the promise to CHRIST, "shalt thou have for the dew of thy youth (*e*).¹ Showers have fallen, drops are still falling, and in the predictions of the word, "there is a sound of abundance of rain," when "the knowledge of the LORD shall cover the earth, as the waters" do the channels of "the sea (*f*).² I saw in the night-visions," says *Daniel*, "and behold, one like the SON of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him, and there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (*g*).³" Saints however there are already, souls pardoned and justified in the blood of JESUS, and renewed and sanctified by the SPIRIT of grace, and they are travelling, some in larger, and some in smaller companies, to the world glory. And, I trust, you my friends of this church, are instances of this sort. You have been, I hope, convinced of sin, you have been humbled and emptied before GOD, you have believed in

JESUS

(*d*) Psalm cx. 3. (*e*) Ver. 4. (*f*) Isaiah xi. 9. (*g*) Dan. vii. 13, 14.

JESUS CHRIST, and have committed your souls to him ; and you, I trust, as the saints of the LORD, are walking in his ordinances and commandments, “ denying all ungodliness and “ worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, “ and godly, in the present world (*b*).” I hope I may address you, as the Apostle *Paul* does the church at *Colosse*, as the “ saints and faithful brethren in CHRIST (*i*);” and O! that while your minister is “ clothed with salvation”, you, as the saints of the LORD, may “ shout aloud for joy :” Which leads me,

IV. To consider the mercy which GOD here promises to his saints. “ And her saints shall “ shout aloud for joy.” They shall *rejoice* in *rejoicing*, or *shout* in *shouting*†, intimating their very great and abounding joy, literally respecting, it may be, if not the very season, yet such a season as when *David* “ brought up the ark of “ the covenant of the LORD, with shouting and “ with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, “ and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps (*k*).” The joy shall not contain itself in silence, but break forth into sound, and this not a faint whisper, but a loud proclamation, like the shout of victory and triumph. The joy shall not be a solitary joy, but it shall be a concert, a confederacy of joy ; the saints of *Zion* shall shout, shout together, and they shall offer to their God a general harmony of

† רננו רנן *Jubilando jubilabunt.*

(*b*) Titus ii. 12. (*i*) Col. i. 2. (*k*) 1 Chron. xv. 28.

of praise. "And her saints shall shout aloud for
"joy."

This promise may either be considered as independent or connected.

1. It may be considered as independent. As if it was said, 'As the priests of *Zion* shall have 'their portion of mercy, "be clothed with "salvation," 'so the saints of *Zion*, they too 'shall have their part of blessing, they shall "shout aloud for joy." And O what an inexhaustible fountain of joy is the word of God! What "exceeding great and precious promises" are there given for the comfort of his people! "We have strong consolation, who flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us (l). "We have everlasting consolation and good "hope through grace (m). The SPIRIT himself bears witness with our spirits, that we are "the children of GOD; and if children, then "heirs, heirs of GOD, and joint-heirs with "CHRIST; if so be that we suffer with him, that "we may be also glorified together (n). How "excellent is thy loving-kindness, O GOD! "therefore the children of men put their trust "under the shadow of thy wings (o). They "shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness "of thine house, and thou shalt make them "drink of the rivers of thy pleasure (p)." O! what comforts can God bestow, and what comforts has he bestowed upon his people! Paul and

(l) Heb. vi. 18. (m) 2 Theff. ii. 16. (n) Rom. viii. 16, 17.

(o) Psalm xxxvi. 7. (p) Ver., 8.

and *Silas*, in darkness, dangers, and dungeons, could sing praises to their God (q). Death in its most rapid marches and with its greatest apparent terrors has been cordially received; nay, and sometimes it may be courted by the saints of God, and their souls have been conquerors, yea "more than conquerors" over all its violence and torture, "through that Jesus who has loved them." When the keeper's wife, almost beside herself, brought that venerable man, Mr *John Bradford* the Martyr in Queen *Mary's* days, intelligence that the chain was buying, and that he must die on the morrow, he pulled off his cap, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, said, 'I thank God for it; I have looked for it a long time, therefore it comes not suddenly, but as a thing waited for every day and hour;' and when he shifted himself into the shirt he was to die in, he made such applications of it to the wedding-garment as raised the admiration of all about him ‡. What pleasure has been drawn by the people of God from the promises opened and applied by the SPIRIT to their hearts? What bright evidences have they had of their interest in CHRIST! What foretastes and first-fruits of heaven have they received! How calm have they been amidst storms! How magnanimous in reproaches! How contented in poverty! How thankful amidst afflictions! How comfortable amidst dangers! And how triumphant

N in

(q) Acts xvi 25. ‡ See his Life in *Biographia Britannica*, Volume II. page 958.

in JESUS CHRIST, in their union to him, and security in him, when to the eye of the world they have seemed wretched and utterly forsaken! They have enjoyed heaven within, though they seemed to have had even hell itself stirred up against them from without. "Though now for
" a season," says the Apostle *Peter*, "if need be
" ye are in heaviness through manifold tempta-
" tions, that the trial of your faith, being much
" more precious than of gold which perisheth,
" though it be tried with fire, might be found
" unto praise and glory and honour at the ap-
" pearance of JESUS CHRIST, whom having not
" seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see
" him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy un-
" speakable and full of glory (r). Then had the
" churches rest throughout all *Judea* and *Gali-*
" *lee* and *Samaria*, and were edified, and walk-
" ing in the fear of the LORD, and in the com-
" fort of the HOLY GHOST, were multiplied (s)." Observe the expressions and their order, "walk-
" ing in the fear of the LORD, and in the com-
" fort of the HOLY GHOST; walking in the
" fear of the LORD," as the air in which they
breathed, "and in the comfort of the HOLY
" GHOST," as the balmy fragrance or refresh-
ing odours which filled that air, as a man walk-
ing in the groves or gardens at this season of
the year not only receives a pure wholesome air,
but enjoys an air impregnated and enlivened
with the richest and most grateful odours. Thus
as

(r) 1 Peter i. 7, 8.

(s) Acts ix. 31.

as the priests of *Zion* have *salvation* for their part, so the saints of *Zion* have *joy*, the greatest occasions for joy, on theirs. But,

2. This promise may be considered not as independent, but as connected. In this view the sense will be, 'I also will clothe her priests with *salvation*, and her saints, in consequence of *this my blessing upon the priests*, shall shout *aloud for joy.*' So that the last promise grows, as it were, out of the first, and *because Zion's priests are clothed with salvation, therefore her saints shall shout aloud for joy.* And if ministers are clothed with salvation, if God upholds and defends them, which you will remember was the first sense we gave of their being clothed with salvation, then what reason will the saints of God, the churches among whom ministers labour, have to shout for joy? The lives of good ministers are oftentimes of very great importance to the churches in which they are placed, though, like other mercies, their full value perhaps is not known till they are removed away. What blessings for a people have been interwoven in the thread of a minister's life that has been drawn out in long, laborious, unwearied service for the glory of God, and the good of souls? How many sinners have been convinced and converted! How many have been edified, strengthened, and comforted! What peace has been enjoyed among the congregations among which they ministered, and while they have been planting and watering, God has in every sense

“ given the increase (*t*): and the wilderness
“ and the solitary places,” towns that might
justly be called such but a few years before,
“ are glad for them, and the desert rejoices and
“ blossoms as the rose(*u*)?” When God therefore
thus preserves and defends his priests, when he
continues their lives, their health, and capacities
for sacred labour and usefulness, when in this
sense he “ clothes them with salvation,” it is no
wonder that we should hear that “ his saints
“ shout aloud for joy.” And why may not the
saints of *Zion* likewise have reason to shout aloud
for joy, when its priests are clothed with salva-
tion in the other sense, that is, as they are mi-
nisters or dispensers of salvation? Will it not
give a pleasure to the people of GOD, to the
churches of CHRIST, to find their ministers, as
they have good grounds to think, filled with a
deep sense of the value of salvation, and to see
them, not like conduit-pipes of stone or lead dis-
persing the waters of life to others, and at the
same time remaining quite insensible, unaffected,
and unblest themselves, but all in earnest for the
salvation of souls, and speaking as men who have
“ seen, and tasted, and felt the word of life”
themselves, and therefore are eager and solicitous
to impart it for the support and nourishment of
others? In like manner, will it not be very de-
lightful to the people of God to find their mi-
nisters entering deeply and largely into the doc-
trines of salvation, and investigating and reveal-
ing

(*t*) 1 Cor. iii. 6.

(*u*) Isaiah xxxv. 1.

ing much concerning the nature, the order, the stability, the fulness, and the obligations of that salvation which we obtain through our LORD JESUS CHRIST? How acceptable, nay, I had almost said, how transporting to every soul that would "grow in grace, and in the knowledge" of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST," to attend that minister, who like a good "householder is bringing out of his treasures things "new and old (x); and is so far from falling, through negligence and self-sufficiency, into a kind of common-place language, and beaten and re-beaten track of ideas, with little or no deviation from them, that on the contrary, every Sermon he preaches contains something *new* in it; I do not mean *new* truth, for our gospel is always the same, it is unchanging like the sun, but truth with *new* representation, *new* explanation, *new* lights, evangelical and practical, cast upon it; *new* improvement and use, and delivered in *new* language, and with *new* fervor and affection? Further, what cause is there for joy among the people of God, when ministers are unwearied in publishing and diffusing abroad salvation, when they are ever contriving or executing something for the honour of God, the promotion of the REDEEMER'S interest, and the benefit of precious and immortal souls, when they are frequently in their visits to their flock speaking on some subject or another, that may tend to edification, and hereby sanctifying and

N 3

seasoning

(x) Matthew xiii. 52.

seasoning even their unbending and freest hours, their very pleasantries with something that has a tendency to do some service either to themselves or others, as the best streams are clear and wholesome, at the same time they are agreeable and delightful, and purity and pleasure harmoniously flow together, and even increase and recommend one another? And finally, is it not matter of joy to the saints, the good people of God, when their ministers' lives are an evidence and display of the power of salvation? Very apposite is the remark of a learned commentator upon the expression, "I also will clothe her priests with salvation;" that is, 'I will render them so conspicuous in conversation and doctrine, as that they shall carry nothing about them but everlasting salvation §.' How divinely pleasant is it to serious holy souls not only to hear salvation from the lips of their ministers, but to see it obvious and resplendent from their conduct? How blest are the eyes of those churches and congregations, who behold the rays, the influences of salvation meeting and concentrating in their ministers' lives, and beaming out from thence with a strong and powerful lustre, so that though there is not a material, yet there is a spiritual glory accompanying their ministers wheresoever they go, and striking all with whom they converse with an irresistible conviction that they are "the servants of the most high" and holy

§ Conspicuos, inquit, faciam conversatione & doctrinâ, ut nihil nisi sempiternam salutem præ se ferant. Clarius in locum.

holy GOD, who may well shew to others the way of salvation, since they are the leaders of the way themselves? Such reasons have the saints of *Zion* to "shout for joy", when the ministers of *Zion* are, in these respects, "clothed with salvation." I proceed,

V. And lastly, To represent our duty in the possession of such a gracious promise as that "GOD will clothe his priests with salvation, and that her saints shall shout aloud for joy." And,

1. What reason have we to bless GOD for such a promise! GOD "will clothe his priests with salvation, and his saints shall shout aloud for joy." How rich and glorious the promise, and how thankful should we be that we are put in its possession! But it may be objected, 'That the promise respects former ages, the times of the *Jewish* œconomy, and not the dispensation of the gospel.' But I answer, Will GOD be less gracious to his ministers and people now, than what he was in former generations? Is the gospel an eclipse or abridgment of our mercies and blessings? Has not our LORD assured us that he "will be with" his ministers always, "even unto the end of the world (y)?" Has he not told us, that "where two or three are gathered together in his name, that there is he in the midst of them (z)?" Did not CHRIST, "when he ascended on high, lead captivity cap-

N 4

"tive,

(y) Matthew xxviii. 20.

(z) Matthew xviii. 20.

"tive, and give gifts unto men?" Did he not
 "give some apostles, and some prophets, and
 "some evangelists, and some pastors, and some
 "teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for
 "the work of the ministry, and for the edify-
 "ing the body of CHRIST (a)?" Are not all the
 promises of GOD in CHRIST "yea, and in him
 "Amen, to the glory of GOD by us (b)?" And
 might I not add, that we have instances of the
 promises of GOD in the Old Testament surviv-
 ing that dispensation, and communicating their
 blessings and joys into the times of the gospel,
 and these promises too that we might be ready
 to apprehend were aboveall others of a contract-
 ed and personal nature, and that could not be
 either perpetuated or extended? *Joshua*, upon
 being ordered by GOD to be the leader of *Israel*
 upon the death of *Moses*, receives this promise,
 "that as GOD had been with *Moses*, so he would
 "be with him, and that he would not fail him,
 "nor forsake him (c)." Now this promise the
 inspired writer to the *Hebrews* gathers from the
 Old Testament and transplants, as knowing
 that nothing of its virtue was lost, into the
 New, and gives it an expresse warrant to blossom
 and yield its fruit to all christians in all ages.
 "Let your conversation," says he, "be without
 "covetousness, and be content with such things
 "as ye have; for he hath said, I will never
 "leave thee nor forsake thee (d)." And in like
 man-

(a) Eph. iv. 8—12. (b) 2 Cor. i. 20. (c) *Joshua* i. 5.

(d) Heb. viii. 5.

manner he adds in the very next verse, still quoting from the Old Testament, "so that we may boldly say, the LORD is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Why may we not then by a parity of reason apply to ourselves, and consider as promised to ourselves the words of our text, "I also will clothe her," that is *Zion's*, "priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy," especially as *Zion* is used in scripture to denote the gospel-church, and as the promise of God in the 11th verse of our psalm, that "of the fruit of *David's* body he would set upon his throne," is applied to our LORD JESUS CHRIST by the Apostle *Peter* (e)? Do not think, my friends, that the promises of the Old Testament are vacated, though the legal rites and ceremonies are expired. We may consider ourselves as possessing the accumulated wealth of promises both of the Old and New Testament, and at the same time that we have an immense accession made to our spiritual substance by the grace of the *New*, we have no reason to apprehend that we are deprived of those mines of privilege and blessing which run through the *Old* Testament. So a man who is the proprietor of a large estate, and has another still larger bequeathed to him, by no means conceives that this larger inheritance makes void his title to the first, but riches roll in upon riches, and possession upon possession. Bless God then for this promise, that he "will
" clothe

(e) Acts ii. 39.

“ clothe” the priests of *Zion* “ with salvation,
“ and that her saints shall shout aloud for joy.”
It will be no sacrilege, though the promise first
grew in the *Jewish* vineyard, to adopt it into our
prayers and praises, our faith and hope in these
days of the gospel.

2. Plead this promise at a throne of grace. Has
God been pleased to say that he “ will clothe his
“ priests with salvation, and that his saints shall
“ shout aloud for joy ?” Say then, as in the 8th
and 9th verses of our psalm, “ Arise, O LORD, in-
“ to thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength :
“ let thy priests be clothed with righteouf-
“ ness, and let thy saints shout for joy.” This
is a promise that may well deserve our warmest
and our most importunate pleas and presenta-
tion before GOD. And indeed as churches of
CHRIST, how important and interesting a con-
cern is it, that the ministers of CHRIST should
be clothed with salvation ; for if they are not,
how shall it be expected that the saints that
compose these churches should ever shout aloud
for joy ? If the minister is salvation, then will
the people be joy. Go home then, my friends,
to your houses, to your closets, and plead for
your ministers, that they, in the views in which
we have represented the promise, may be cloth-
ed with salvation. “ Brethren,” says the Apostle
Paul, “ pray for us (f).” It is kind in you to
bear us upon your hearts at the mercy-seat, we
earnestly desire this remembrance of us, and we
will

will thank you for it ; but consider likewise, that you are in fact while you are praying for us, praying for yourselves, for if God bless us, you may then hope that he will bless you by us. If our hearts are touched by a live coal from the altar, you may then expect that you shall have our best endeavours and our ardent prayers, that the holy fire shall be communicated to you in our ministrations and services among you ; at least, we well know, that if we are not clothed with salvation, that you will have little ground to expect that you will have any cause to shout for joy.

3. And lastly, Let there be a mutual love and communion of souls between ministers and people. Their interests are nearly connected, and in a manner interwoven into one another. If *Zion's* priests are " clothed with salvation, her saints " will shout aloud for joy:" and if her saints shout aloud for joy, what joy must necessarily fill her pious priests? And shall there not then be a reciprocal affection and union of souls between ministers and people, when their mutual prosperity is, as it were, embarked in the same bottom? O! that there may be love unbroken, undecaying, fervent, and sacred love between ministers and their churches! Let ministers show their love by diligently studying for their people, by frequent and pious visits among them, by praying for them in public and private, by watching over their souls, " as those who " must give an account," and in a word, by delighting

lighting to oblige and serve them in all things that may further their spiritual improvement and eternal salvation. And on the other hand, let the people love their ministers, pray for them, provide for their honourable support, and strengthen and encourage their hearts and hands in their master's work; and thus shall the flocks of CHRIST with their shepherds have reason to rejoice both now and in the day of the LORD! I shall conclude with the suitable and most expressive prayer of the Apostle *Paul*, "Now our
 " LORD JESUS CHRIST himself, and GOD,
 " even our FATHER, who hath loved us, and
 " hath given us everlasting consolation, and
 " good hope through grace, comfort your hearts
 " and establish you in every good word and
 " work (g)." *AMEN* and *AMEN*.

(g) 2 Theff. ii. 16, 17.

*An HYMN, suited to the foregoing
 Sermon.*

I.

THUS saith the LORD, whose truth shall stand
 When Nature's self decays,
 " I will shew mercy to my land,
 " And fill it with my praise."

II.

The priests of *Zion* shall be mine,
 " For *Zion* is my rest;
 " And in my glories they shall shine,
 " In full salvation drest.

III.

“ Each threat’ning shaft of death my hand
“ Shall gently turn aside ;
“ My mercies too, at my command,
“ Their tongues shall publish wide.

IV.

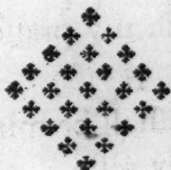
“ Their lives to truths their lips impart
“ Shall give the stamp divine ;
“ And Holiness, thron’d in the heart,
“ Shall o’er their actions shine.

V.

“ My saints shall taste my richest grace,
“ And shout their joys aloud :
“ I will reveal a FATHER’S face,
“ Without a frown or cloud.

VI.

“ This, this my promise shall remain
“ Immutably secure,
“ Long as the sun or moon shall reign,
“ Or heav’n and earth endure.”





S E R M O N VIII.

The nature of Christian Perfection.



2 COR. XIII. 9.

For we are glad when we are weak, and ye are strong ; and this also we wish, even your perfection.

IT is an obvious remark that the Apostle *Paul* upon the conclusion of his epistles more especially gives the persons to whom he addrestes them some very excellent practical instructions, or some very warm and affectionate wishes ; as if none should depart from the feast which he as a good householder had furnished for them, without some spiritual improvement upon their minds, or some kind tokens how much he was concerned for their spiritual benefit.

Towards the conclusion of this epistle we find his holy soul breathing its paternal desires for the

the church at *Corinth*, that they might “do no evil,” verse 7th; but that in all respects they might prove themselves an honour to the sacred profession they made, and the holy Name, by which they were distinguished and called. “For we are glad,” says he, in the verse of our text, “when we are weak,” when we seem to be so, by having no occasion to exert the miraculous powers with which we are invested for your admonition, reproof, and terror: and “when ye,” on the other hand, “are strong,” strong in gifts and graces, in the faith and obedience of the gospel: “And this also we wish,” adds he, “even your perfection.” And what the Apostle wished for the church of *Corinth*, that will all good ministers wish for the churches among which they are called to “labour in word and doctrine.” A divine love and zeal for the glory of God and CHRIST, and the good of the souls committed to their care, are common to them all, though in some they may be only like a smaller fire, while in others they burn as with the flames of a mighty and overpowering conflagration.

In discoursing upon the words I have read, “And this also we wish, even your perfection.” I shall,

- I. Consider what is the object of the Apostle's wish or prayer; and this is the *perfection* of the church at *Corinth*. And,

II.

II. I shall offer some reasons why the Apostle wished or prayed for the perfection of the church of *Corinth*.

I. I shall consider what is the object of the Apostle's wish or prayer; and this is the *perfection* of the church at *Corinth*. There is something worthy of observation in the word which our version here renders *perfection*. The word may perhaps be more justly translated your refitting, restitution, or restoration. 'The Apostle's meaning is,' says the learned *Beza*, 'that where- as the members of the church at *Corinth* had been, as it were, dislocated, or put out of joint, they should now again be compacted and re- united together in love*.' The consequence of which would be, that henceforward they would rectify whatsoever was amiss among them in faith, discipline, and practice. In *Gal. vi. 1.* the same Apostle exhorts, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." Our text has the substantive, and this passage has the verb, "restore such an one;" that is, set him as it were in joint again, restore him to your body: the word being borrowed, it may be, from surgeons, who attempting to set a broken

O or

* *Varia enim est & multiplex verbi Κατασκευασθαι significatio. Mihi vero proximum versiculum cum isto comparanti videtur Apostolum nihil aliud hoc nomine significare, quam suum hoc esse consilium, ut Corinthiacæ ecclesiæ membris, quæ laxata fuerant, rursus in locum suum veluti repositis, totum illud corpus, mutuo connexis membris instauraretur, ut Gal. vi. 1. itaque licebat etiam reconstructionem interpretari. Beza in locum.*

or dislocated joint, perform their work with great care and tenderness†. Only consider, my friends, the church of CHRIST as a body to which it is compared *Eph.* iv. 16. and consider every wilful sin, all irregular and unsuitable walk and behaviour in the persons that constitute it, as a dislocation of some joint or member of this body, and then frame to yourselves the idea of the health and happiness the body enjoys when it has no joint or limb out of place, but is full of life, and spirit, and vigour, and thence form your sentiments of what the Apostle may intend, when he says, “And this also we wish, even
 “ your perfection.” “ We wish you thorough
 ‘ restoration and recovery ; we wish you perfect ease and enjoyment in all and in every
 ‘ part, that there may not be so much as a sore,
 ‘ a wound, or a pain among you ;’ or as the same Apostle speaks to another church (*b*), That
 “ speaking the truth in love, ye may grow up
 “ into him in all things, who is the head, even
 “ CHRIST, from whom the whole body fitly
 “ joined together, and compacted by that which
 “ every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part,
 “ makes increase of the body, unto the edifying
 “ of itself in love.” The sagacious Dr *Guyse* accordingly gives this paraphrase of our text. ‘ Yea,
 ‘ I heartily wish that all things were brought in-
 ‘ to good order among you, that ye were entire-
 ‘ ly

† Vide *Leighium* in verb. *Κατάγειζω*.

(*b*) *Ephes.* iv. 15, 16.

ly knit together in faith and love, like a complete and well-compacted body, and that every grace were perfected in you all, and that there were no defect or remainder of sin in any of you†. The Apostle then wishes or prays for the church at *Corinth*, restoration, spiritual health, ease and soundness in every part, without the exception of a single member, or joint of this sacred body; by which we may understand that he wished or prayed for the church of *Corinth*, spiritual knowledge, spiritual experience, and spiritual practice.

1. When the Apostle wishes or prays for the prosperity of the church at *Corinth*, he may be supposed to wish or pray for them spiritual knowledge. What the eye is to the body, that knowledge is to the soul, and as to be without the sight of the body is of dangerous consequence to a man who walks, so it is no less prejudicial to the soul that is making its way through time into eternity, to be destitute of knowledge. "Al-
" so," says the wise man, " that the soul be
" without knowledge, it is not good (i)." It is told us farther, that " the people are destroyed
" for lack of knowledge (k)." And of CHRIST it is said, that " in him was life, and the life was
" the light of men (l)." Let me wish then, my friends, your prosperity as to spiritual knowledge. Study more the perfections, the nature, the grace and glories of your G o d, and especially

O 2

as

† *Guyse's* Paraphrase on the place.

(i) Prov. xix. 2.

(k) Hosea iv. 6.

(l) John i. 4.

as he reveals himself to us, and shines upon us in the face of JESUS CHRIST. See the harmony of the divine attributes in the redemption of man, and understand well why it was that CHRIST suffered and died, and how that from his propitiation and righteousness arise both “glory to God, and goodwill towards men (*m*);” and that through him, “God is just, and the justifier of sinners (*n*).” Contemplate upon the person, the offices, the example, and the promises of your REDEEMER: his person, that he is both GOD and man; “EMMANUEL, God with us (*o*); the brightness of his FATHER’s glory, “and the express image of his person (*p*); the “Child born, and the SON given,” and yet “the mighty GOD, and the everlasting FATHER (*q*)” Consider him in this view as well qualified to be a reconciler and Mediator between God and man; as one who well understands the rights of God and the miseries of men, and who carries, as it were, in his person the very end of his coming, the reconciliation and union between heaven and earth. Survey the LORD JESUS CHRIST likewise in his offices. Know and acknowledge him as a Prophet for instruction and illumination; as a Priest for atonement and intercession; and as a King for authority and government: and do not neglect our LORD JESUS CHRIST as an example. Behold him in his life fulfilling all righteousness, full of piety

(*m*) Luke ii. 14.(*n*) Rom. iii. 26.(*o*) Matt. i. 23.(*p*) Heb. i. 3.(*q*) Isa. ix. 6.

piety and devotion to his heavenly FATHER, and exhibiting in our world a spotless and unparalleled pattern of benevolence and compassion, truth and innocence, patience and meekness, and that for this end, that we should follow his steps, "should learn of him, and take his yoke upon us which is easy, and bear his burden which is light (r)." Study likewise the promises of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, how rich and full they are, promises of wisdom and strength, of grace and of glory, and how the HOLY SPIRIT to apply these promises is present in the hearts of the people of God, resides and works in them, and is training them up under his sanctifying influences, and animating consolations, for their perfection in holiness, and happiness in heaven. Let our line be often cast into that deep which is unfathomable, for the deeper we go, the more shall we admire and love, though the bottom remains, after our most laborious essays, as unsearchable as ever. Let us try to grasp, and stretch our utmost powers to comprehend those subjects, which are in themselves incomprehensible, for we shall know more of them by these attempts, and shall be more convinced of their exuberance and riches, than what we could ever attain while negligent and inattentive to them: as he who takes a view of the amazing ocean, though he can never by the means either assign its bounds, or ascertain its depths, will have larger and more lively ideas

O 3

of

(r) Matth. xi. 29, 30.

of it, than he ever could obtain without this, though but an inadequate and imperfect survey. Accordingly our Apostle prays for the *Ephesians*, that the FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, “ would grant them according to the riches of
 “ his glory to be strengthened with might by his
 “ SPIRIT in the inner man, that they might be
 “ able to comprehend with all saints, what is the
 “ breadth, and length, and depth, and height,
 “ and to know the love of CHRIST which passeth
 “ knowledge, that they might be filled with
 “ all the fulness of God (s).” Let me add, that you are to increase in knowledge, not merely in the grace and privileges, but in the precepts and ordinances of the gospel. Contemplate well the commands of the divine word, see how pure and holy they are, shining as with the immaculate lustre of heaven upon them, and understand how they are to be honoured and obeyed from the very mercy and comforts which are in CHRIST JESUS, as motives and arguments applied to, and felt upon our hearts. There is to be a reciprocal communication and correspondence between grace and duty, and grace is to lead to duty, as duty is to fly to the aids of grace. So we are taught, that “ sin is to have no do-
 “ minion over us, because we are not under the
 “ law, but under grace (t);” and that “ the love
 “ of CHRIST is to constrain us, because we thus
 “ judge, that if one died for all, then were all
 “ dead, and that they who live should not

“ hence-

(s) Eph. iii. 16—19.

(t) Rom. vi. 14.

(u)
(z)
(c) F

“ henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him
 “ who died for them, and rose again (*u*);” and
 “ the blood of CHRIST purges our consciences
 “ from dead works to serve the living GOD (*x*).”

In a word, let us spare no pains as far as may be
 taken in consistence with your prudent regard
 to the affairs of life, and the world, to be tho-
 roughly acquainted with the divine word, and
 let us treasure up the doctrines, promises, and
 precepts of it, for our instruction, edification,
 and comfort. “ Let the word of CHRIST dwell

“ in you richly in all wisdom (*y*). Thy testi-
 “ monies,” says the Psalmist, “ are my delight,
 “ and my counsellors (*z*). O how love I thy
 “ law! it is my meditation all the day (*a*).”

How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea,
 “ sweeter than honey to my mouth (*b*).” And

again, “ The judgments of the LORD are true

“ and righteous altogether, more to be desired

“ are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold,

“ sweeter also than the honey and the honey-

“ comb (*c*).” And the blessed man, he who “ is

“ like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that

“ brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf

“ shall not wither,” the man of whom it shall

be said, that “ whatsoever he doth shall prosper,”

so sweet and constant shall be the smiles of the

divine love upon him, this blessed man is the

man “ who walks not in the counsel of the

“ ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners,

O 4

“ nor

(*u*) 2 Cor. v. 14.

(*x*) Heb. ix. 14.

(*y*) Col. iii. 16.

(*z*) Psal. cxix. 24.

(*a*) Ver. 97.

(*b*) Ver. 103.

(*c*) Psal. xix. 9, 10.

“ nor sits in the seat of the scornful, but takes
“ up his delight in the law of the LORD, and
“ meditates upon it day and night(*d*).” Let that
exhortation be inscribed in indelible characters
upon the fleshly tables of our hearts, and let us
ever feel the force and influence of it; “ Grow
“ in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD
“ and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST(*e*).” Never
let a day pass without renewing and increasing
your acquaintance with the scriptures. They
“ are able to make us wise unto salvation.”
They will be “ a light to our feet, a lamp to our
“ paths,” a map to guide, a cordial to comfort,
and a refuge to which we may fly in all our
times of trouble. There we shall see God in the
wonders of his power, in the perfection of his
wisdom, in the beauties of his holiness, in the
terrors of his justice, and the boundless and eter-
nal riches of his grace. There we shall “ learn
“ the things that belong to our everlasting peace,
“ and shall know GOD and CHRIST, whom to
“ know is life eternal.” Let us aim “ to be
“ scribes well instructed in the mysteries of the
“ kingdom of heaven,” or like unto “ good
“ householders, bringing out of our treasures
“ things which are new and old(*f*).” Let it
not be said of us, through our neglect of the
word of God, “ that when for the time we
“ ought to have been teachers, we have need
“ that one should teach us again, which are the
“ first

(*d*) Psal. i. 1—3.

(*e*) 2 Peter iii. 18.

(*f*) Mat. xiii. 52.

“ first principles of the oracles of GOD (g).” Whatever knowledge we die without, however fashionable, however splendid, let us not die without the knowledge of GOD, and CHRIST, and ourselves. “ This wisdom that comes from above, is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom ; and with all our getting, let us get understanding (b).” See a glorious example of a great proficient in this kind of knowledge in the Apostle *Paul*, and how much better and pleasanter to him was it, than all the learned lectures at the feet of *Gamaliel*? “ But what things,” says he, “ were gain to me, these I counted loss for CHRIST, yea doubtless, and I do count all things but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS my LORD, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win CHRIST, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of CHRIST, the righteousness which is of GOD by faith; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death (i).” Thus may the Apostle when he wishes the perfection, or prosperity of the church of CHRIST at *Corinth*, wish their spiritual knowledge. And in this view, my friends, do I wish, do I pray for your prosperity, for your spiritual knowledge, that you may, “ as with
“ open

(g) Heb. vi. 12.

(b) Prov. iv. 4.

(i) Phil. iii. 8, 9, 10.

“ open face, behold as in a glass the glory of
 “ the LORD, and be changed into the same
 “ image from glory to glory, even as by the
 “ SPIRIT of the LORD (*k*).” When I wish well
 to CHRIST’s body, his Church, I cannot but more
 especially wish well to the eye of this body, that
 it may “ be single and full of light,” that it may
 be ever open and quick to discern between things
 that differ, and that it may be ever ready to dis-
 cover what is for the glory of GOD, and the
 comfort and benefit of each other in the good
 ways of the LORD.

2. When the Apostle wishes or prays for the
 prosperity of the church at *Corinth*, he may be
 understood to wish or pray for their spiritual
 experience. Knowledge alone is only a light in
 the head. To knowledge therefore let there be
 added *Experience*, which will diffuse life, and
 warmth, and joy to the heart. *Balaam* is said to
 “ have his eyes open (*l*),” but with all his know-
 ledge it is to be feared that he went down to
 hell. *Judas* was an Apostle, and might have a
 deep insight into the truths of the gospel, but his
 heart was still “ in the gall of bitterness, and
 “ the bonds of iniquity. Not every one,” says
 our LORD, “ that saith unto me, LORD, LORD,
 “ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he
 “ that does the will of my FATHER which is in
 “ heaven; many will say unto me in that day,
 “ LORD, LORD, have we not prophesied in thy
 “ Name, and in thy Name cast out devils, and
 “ in

(*k*) 2 Cor. iii. 18.(*l*) Numb. xxiv. 3.

“ in thy Name done many wonderful works ?
“ and then will I profess unto them, I never
“ knew you ; depart from me, ye that work
“ iniquity.” Who can have a more penetrating
eye, or a deeper or ampler knowledge of divine
truths, than *Satan* ? and yet his spirit carries
with it the malignity and horrors of hell. His
“ light shines in” infernal “ darkness, and the
“ darkness comprehends it not.” Do not let us
be content to be spectators of the wonderful
things contained in the law of GOD, or the gos-
pel of JESUS CHRIST, but let us be concerned
that they may be brought near to us, and that
we may improve, apply, and live upon them, as
the food and support of our souls. “ Thy words
“ were found,” says good *Jeremiah*, “ and I did
“ eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy
“ and rejoicing of my heart (*m*). Wherefore,”
says the Apostle *James*, “ lay apart all filthiness
“ and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with
“ meekness the ingrafted word,” the word that
is to be made one with our hearts, to be inserted
and fixed there, as the scion unites with the
tree in which it is ingrafted, and so will the word
be “ able to save your souls (*n*).” And to the
same purpose we read of “ tasting that the LORD
“ is gracious (*o*).” Bread in picture will not sa-
tisfy an hungry stomach, nor will water in pic-
ture allay a scorching thirst, and the gospel, the
great truths and discoveries concerning GOD
and CHRIST, will not bless and save us in an
out-

(*m*) Jer. xv. 16.(*n*) James i. 21.(*o*) 1 Peter ii. 3.

outward representation, without the internal influence and power of them upon the heart. O! that what we believe we may also feel, and be guided, governed, animated, and strengthened by it to every good word and work! We should be solicitous that the gospel may be "the favour of life unto life, and the power of God unto salvation" to our souls. "Ye have obeyed," says the Apostle, "that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you;" or, 'that form, or type, or mould of doctrine into which ye were delivered (p).' This manner of speech, says that excellent commentator *Beza*, 'appears to have a great emphasis in it. Hereby is signified that the doctrine of the gospel is like some model or type into which our souls are cast, that we might receive its figure, and that our whole transformation is to be ascribed to it. Just as wax, says *Basil*, put into a mould for sculpture, has the figure of the mould exactly delineated upon it, so we yielding ourselves to the mould of the doctrine of the gospel, are fashioned according to it in the inward man.' To the same purpose another able commentator renders

(p) Rom vi. 17. Ἐπηρεσάτε δὲ ἐν καρδίᾳ εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε τὸν διδασκῆν. Hoc dicendi genus magnam quandam emphasim videtur habere. Ita enim significatur, evangelicam doctrinam quasi instar typi cuiusdam esse, cui veluti immittamur, ut ejus figuræ conformemur, & totam istam transformationem aliunde provenire: ut quemadmodum cera (inquit *Basil* in Tractatu de Baptismo) sculpturæ typo tradita, figuram quæ sculpturæ inest accuratè exprimit, ita & nos evangelicæ doctrinæ typo nos tradentes, secundum interiorem hominem figuremur.

BEZA in locum.

renders the passage, 'the model of doctrine into which ye were delivered;' and says, 'That it is probable that here is an allusion to melted metal being formed by the mould into which it is poured, and that it finely expresses the pliancy of temper with respect to the gospel, which constitutes so lovely a part of the true christian's character ||.' Mere knowledge is not sufficient to form the christian; there must be an experience of divine truth upon our hearts, or our religion is vain, and has never come in saving power and efficacy to our souls. What I intend by this experience I will represent to you in a few words. We are not only to assent to a doctrine, but we are to improve and apply it, and feel its energy upon our hearts. As for instance:—Am I told in scripture, that "the whole world is become guilty before God," and that I and my fellow-sinners are exposed to the wrath and curse of God, due to us for sin? It is not enough that I believe this awful truth, but I am to have a sense of it, I am to confess it with shame and sorrow before God; I am to smite upon my breast, with the publican, and to cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" and I am to acknowledge the divine justice, if it should seize me by the throat, and rigidly demand of me, "Pay me what thou owest," and for my utter insolvency cast me into the infernal prison.

In

|| Doddridge on the place.

In like manner, Do I hear from the word of God of a SAVIOUR, JESUS, the SON of GOD, who has redeemed sinners by the inestimable price of his own blood, "who was made sin for us, though he himself knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," one who was appointed to save, and who is willing and "able to save," and that "to the uttermost, all such as come unto God by him?" Surely it is not enough that I barely assent to this truth, which undoubtedly devils and damned spirits do, and many wretched sinners also in our world; but I am to rest and rely upon this REDEEMER, I am to plead his merits and righteousness, his advocacy and intercession, as the ground of my justification and acceptance before the offended, jealous, sin-hating and sin-avenging DEITY. This truth is to be dear to me. I am to cast the anchor of my faith and hope upon it. I am to "look" to CHRIST (*q*), as the *Israelites* bitten with the fiery serpents did to the brazen serpent, for healing and salvation. I am to "trust in him" (*r*), and to lodge the vast deposit of my soul, my All, and that for eternity, in his all-powerful hands. As the Apostle speaks, "I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day," the day of his second appearance (*s*)."

(*q*) Isaiah xlv. 22.(*r*) Psalm ii. 12.(*s*) 2 Tim. ii. 12.

In like manner I might go over the promises of the word, and show how I am not only to believe them, but to embrace them, trust in them, plead them at the throne of grace, and even live upon them. So again, as to the precepts of the word, I am not only to believe that they are the commands of God, the transcript of his will and his law itself, which "is holy, just, and good;" but I am to open my heart to receive them with all readiness and joy, that I may be "a living epistle of JESUS CHRIST," known and read of all men, and that my very soul may be a copy of the great fundamental laws of heaven, saying from the heart, "Speak, LORD, for thy servant heareth;" and, "LORD, what wilt thou have me to do?" You see then, my friends, what it is I design by *Experience*, a word which through the false pretences of hypocrites on one side, and the scoffs and ridicule of ignorant infidelity and profaneness on the other, may be greatly contemned and set at nought in our days: but it is no other in fact, than the union, the incorporation of divine truths in our hearts, or an answerable correspondence in ourselves to the counsels and will of God, and the gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

And in this sense we may suppose that the Apostle wished or prayed for the prosperity of the church at *Corinth*, and in this sense I wish and pray for your prosperity: and with my fervent wishes and prayers for this most important and inestimable blessing I will conclude my discourse.

O!

O! that your wills and affections may be guided and governed, penetrated and sanctified by the divine word! O that GOD would give what he desires, "truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part would make you to know wisdom (*t*)!" O that your hearts may be ready to receive the impressions of the divine word, and fall in with its holy and heavenly directions! In reading or hearing the divine word, if it is a promise, may it kindle your joy! If it is a threatening, may it awaken your fear and caution! If it is a prohibition against sin, may it inflame your hatred! If it is an exhortation to duty, may it draw forth your love, and determine your obedience! If it is a pious example that presents itself before you, may it excite you to imitation! If it is a bad character that is held before you in scripture, let it be abominable in your eyes, and excite you to an holy watchfulness against the like iniquity! If it be a glorious and comfortable doctrine that shines before you in the sacred pages, such as the grace of GOD in giving his SON, the influences of the SPIRIT, or the assurance of eternal life and blessedness through JESUS CHRIST, let it fill you with admiration, let it invite your faith, be like oil to the flame of love, and be felt upon your hearts in perpetual gratitude and thanksgiving! And may it be carried about with you, as a source of your joy, and as a motive to your obedience! O! for this experience among all of us!

(*t*) Psalm li. 6.

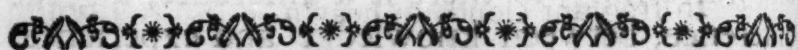
us! I fear it is but little in some of our hearts, and may I not venture to say, without any suspicion of unjust reproach upon even the best of us, that it is not enough in any. Do not let us merely seek knowledge, but let us be solicitous to improve what we have, that divine truths may answer the ends upon us, for which they were declared and delivered to us. As there is a difference between star-beams and sun-beams, the beams of stars being clear and bright, but yet cold and ineffectual, but the beams of the sun being not only clear and bright, but warming and refreshing, so there is a difference, a great difference, between knowledge and experience. O then for that radiation of divine truth which shall convey at once light and life into our souls! O that "the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS" may arise upon us not only with light, but "with healing under his wings (*u*)!" I had rather, much rather be weak and narrow in my understanding, and have only just light enough to show me my way to heaven, together with the experience of the power of the gospel upon my heart, than be possessed of the largest abilities, and have my understanding adorned with the brightest and most beautiful notions, at the same time that my heart is not right with God, and refuses to receive and apply the doctrines and precepts of the gospel. It was an awful reflection that I heard was once made by an

P eminent

(*u*) Mal. iv. 2.

eminent person, who had been witness to the piety of a pious poor man : ‘ The unlearned
 ‘ take heaven by violence, while we with all
 ‘ our learning go down to hell *!’ O for heavenly light to be collected as the rays of the sun by a burning-glass, and to kindle our hearts with such a divine flame, as that it may shine in honour to our GOD, and in blessing to mankind, till grace shall be consummated in glory!

* *Indocti rapiunt cælum, dum nos cum doctrinâ ruimus in gehennam.*



*An H Y M N, suited to the
 foregoing Sermon.*

I.

THE new-born world immers'd in night,
 And gloomy horrors lay,
 Th' Almighty said, “ Let there be light,”
 And pour'd the boundless day.

II.

Thus o'er the greater world within
 Let beams immortal shine :
 Scatter, O LORD, the clouds of sin,
 And spread a dawn divine.

III.

III.

Attendant on this sacred light
Celestial fire impart:
And let the ray that guides my sight,
Inflame my frozen heart.

IV.

Thus all the pow'rs this spirit knows,
Shall to my God be giv'n,
Sweet as when Aaron's incense rose
In fragrant clouds to heav'n.



S E R M O N . IX.

The nature of Christian Perfection

THE true ministers of Jesus Christ
the friends of the poor, and
the friends of the weak, will not be con-
fused by the expressions
of their labors, but by their attendance
on their ministrations, and their ready con-
tributions towards their support in life. Far from
minding their views and duties to these smaller
matters, they breathe after higher and better
things. They watch over their souls, as those
who must give an account. They seek not
themselves, but them, the accountants, but
themselves, not their people approving smiles,
and

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S E R M O N IX.

The nature of Christian Perfection.



2 COR. XIII. 9.

For we are glad when we are weak, and ye are strong ; and this also we wish, even your perfection.

THE true ministers of JESUS CHRIST, the friends of the bridegroom, and the friends of souls, will not be contented with their peoples approbation of their labours, or with the expressions of their kindness to him by their attendance upon their ministrations, and their ready contributions towards their support in life. Far from limiting their views and desires to these smaller matters, they breathe after higher and better things. " They watch over their souls, as those who must give an account. They seek not theirs, but them ;" not circumstantial, but essentials, not their peoples approving smiles, and

and secular favours, but the prosperity and promotion of their spiritual and everlasting interests. A good minister is ready to say in a divine sense, to his God, "Give me children, or I die;" 'give me to be a Father of many many souls, so as to be the instrument of their regeneration, and spiritual life, or my end is frustrated, and I fear I shall droop and sink in the service.' The Apostle *John* says, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth (x)." The Apostle speaks of his "travailing in birth till CHRIST was formed" in the *Galatians* (y); and he here tells the *Corinthians*, "and this also we wish, even your perfection." 'This is what we desire and pray for; this is what lies near our hearts, and directs and animates all our labours.'

"This also we wish, even your perfection." Here I proposed to consider,

I. What is the object of the Apostle's prayer. And this is the *perfection* of the church at *Corinth*.

II. I was to offer some reasons why the Apostle wished or prayed for the perfection of the church at *Corinth*.

I. I proposed to consider the object of the Apostle's wish or prayer. And this is the *perfection* of the church at *Corinth*. Here I previously explained to you what we are to understand by the

(x) 3 John 4.

(y) Gal. iv. 19.

the word the Apostle here uses, which our translators render *perfection*, or which may be nearer the original, the replacing, restoration, or spiritual prosperity of the church at *Corinth*; there being an allusion to a body, and the health, soundness, and enjoyment of itself in all and every part. I then told you that when the Apostle wished or prayed for the prosperity of the church at *Corinth*, he might wish or pray for their spiritual knowledge, their spiritual experience, and their spiritual practice. Two of these particulars I have considered, and it remains,

III. And lastly, To show that the Apostle when he wishes or prays for the prosperity of the church at *Corinth*, may be supposed to wish or pray for their spiritual or holy practice. 'I wish, 'I pray for your prosperity as to your christian 'practice.' Let knowledge and experience be the roots, and an holy practice be the fruits springing from them, fruits that shall be acceptable to GOD through JESUS CHRIST, and fruits that shall be profitable to men. Christians are not to talk great things, but to perform them. It is not enough to say, "LORD, LORD," if we do not the things which our Master enjoins us. Our lips are not to cry *Hosanna*, and our lives to wage violent and open war against our Sovereign. CHRIST requires us to do more than others (z), and he has assured us, that "except
P 4 "ness

(z) Matth. v. 47.

“ness of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall in
 “no case enter into the kingdom of heaven (a).”
 The gospel distinguishes and separates between
 the sinner and sin. It saves the sinner, but it
 “lays the ax to the root” of sin, or, to allude
 to a well-known passage in holy writ (b), it
 “cries aloud” against sin, even from amidst all
 its love and mercy, “Hew down the tree, and
 “cut off its branches, shake off its leaves, and
 “scatter its fruits.” What exhortations, what
 persuasives, what inforcements to a life of holy
 obedience do we find in our New Testament?
 “If ye love me,” says CHRIST, “keep my
 “commandments (c).” And, “He that hath
 “my commandments, and keeps them, he it is
 “that loves me; and he that loves me, shall
 “be loved of my FATHER, and I will love
 “him, and will manifest myself to him (d).”
 And after he had spoken of himself as a vine,
 and his people as branches, he says, “Herein
 “is my FATHER glorified, that ye bear much
 “fruit, so shall ye be my disciples (e).” And
 as spake our LORD, so spake his Apostles,
 who were anointed with the same Spirit, and
 were his chosen and faithful messengers to the
 world. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by
 “the mercies of God, that ye present your bo-
 “dies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto
 “GOD, which is your reasonable service (f).”
 But “put ye on the LORD JESUS CHRIST,
 “and

(a) Mat. v. 20.

(b) Dan. iv. 14.

(c) John xiv. 15.

(d) John xiv. 21.

(e) John xv. 8.

(f) Rom. xii. 1.

“ and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil
“ the lusts thereof (g). Follow peace with all
“ men, and holiness, without which no man
“ shall see the LORD (h). Who is a wise man,
“ and endowed with knowledge among you ?
“ Let him show out of a good conversation his
“ works with meekness of wisdom (i). For ye
“ are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood,
“ an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye
“ should shew forth the praises of him who
“ hath called you out of darkness into his mar-
“ vellous light (k). What manner of persons
“ ought ye to be in all holy conversation and
“ godliness (l) ? For the grace of GOD that
“ brings salvation hath appeared to all men,
“ teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and
“ worldly lusts, we should live soberly” (that is,
in all temperance and purity as to ourselves)
“ righteously” (that is, in all integrity and justice
as to our neighbours) “ and godly” (that is, in
all devotion and obedience unto GOD) “ in this
“ present world ; looking for that blessed hope,
“ and the glorious appearance of the great GOD,
“ and our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST ; who
“ gave himself for us, that he might redeem
“ us from all iniquity, and might purify unto
“ himself a peculiar people, zealous of good
“ works (m).” And again ; “ This is a faithful
“ saying,” says the Apostle *Paul* to *Titus*, “ and
“ these things I will that thou affirm constant-
“ ly,

(g) Rom. xiii. 14. (h) Heb. xii. 14. (i) James iii. 13.

(k) 1 Peter ii. 9. (l) 2 Peter iii. 11. (m) Tit. 2, 11—14.

“ly, that they which have believed in G O D
“might be careful to maintain good works;
“these things are good and profitable unto
“men (n).” But I forbear multiplying passages.
Was I to pursue this matter as far as it would
go, I should transcribe great part of the New
Testament. Only let me recommend to you par-
ticularly the 6th and 8th of the *Romans*, and the
3d of the *Colossians*, where you will find grace and
duty, privilege and obedience most admirably
mingled together, and appearing “like apples
“of gold set in pictures of silver,” or like a clear
transparent stream flowing over sands of gold,
or through rich enameled meadows. Well then
might the Apostle, well may every faithful ser-
vant of JESUS CHRIST wish and pray for the
prosperity of christians, as to a spiritual and ho-
ly practice. O that each of us, as members of
the Church of CHRIST, as plants in the garden
of the LORD, would contribute all that we can,
by a careful and exemplary performance of our
duty to the spiritual improvement and edifica-
tion in love and holiness. Am I a minister? Let
me pray and endeavour to show myself to be “a
“workman approved of GOD, that need not to be
“ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,
“giving to each their portion in due season, and
“not shunning to declare the whole counsel of
“GOD.” Let me give myself to reading, to me-
ditation and prayer; let me “be instant in sea-
“son, and out of season, and reprove, rebuke
“and

(n) Titus iii. 8.

“and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.” Let me be often meditating upon the qualifications of a bishop or pastor, and be earnestly begging help from above, that not one of those graces or virtues delineated in scripture may be wanting from my character, but may, on the other hand, increase and “abound yet more and more” in me. And let me see to it that I am an example to my people, not contenting myself to be a silent finger, only to direct them right, but showing myself an animating leader, to go before them in the way everlasting, that so I may be able to say, though with a deep abasing sense of my many imperfections before God, as the Apostle *Paul*, “Those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, do (o).” Or again, Am I a deacon in the church of God? Let me remember what was the end of the original institution, what are the requisites in my character, as described in the divine word, and let me take heed conscientiously and uprightly to serve the table of the LORD, the table of the poor, and discharge the other duties incumbent upon me. Or, Am I only a private member of the church? Let me pray for the church and minister, let me give my attendance where I have declared my choice of the ministry, and in the church to which I have given up my name, to walk in the ordinances and commandments of the LORD. Let me be willing to do good, according as my abi-

(o) Phil. iv. 9.

abilities will admit, and as opportunities offer, to my fellow-members, by contributing to the relief of the poor, by my counsels, admonitions, and by an inoffensive and unblameable conversation and conduct. Am I a tradesman? Let me see to it that no sin mingles itself with my traffick or my gains; let me seek to, and depend upon Providence to bless me in my lawful calling, and to give success to my endeavours; and let me especially remember the golden rule which my LORD has left me, "That I should do unto others, as I would they should do unto me (*p*)."

Let me be "diligent in business, providing things honest in the sight of all men," and by a sense of GOD, communion with him, and a desire to obey him, and promote his glory, turn even my secular and civil employments into "a sacrifice, holy and acceptable" to him. An heart favouring of heaven, with the hands and feet in worldly business and employments, are no inconsistencies; and in this view we may serve GOD, and commune with him as certainly, though not so directly, in the shop as we do in the sanctuary, in the labours of our calling, as in the devotions of a sacrament. Happy they who are merchants for heaven and earth at once, and that sanctify the traffick of one world by their perpetual regards and uninterrupted commerce with a better! Further, as to my characters and relations in life, let me be careful to study and perform the

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(*p*) Matt. vii. 12.

ties belonging to them, whether they be those of husband or wife, or parent or child, or brother or sister, or master or servant, or neighbour, or subject. I shall find my duties upon this head contained in the word of GOD. Religion is not a matter that respects GOD only, but as its topmost boughs, may I so speak, are to aspire upwards, and to be "Holiness to the LORD," so the lower branches are to yield their fruits, and diffuse their shadow over the families and neighbourhoods where I dwell. "I will be," says GOD, "as the dew unto *Israel*; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as *Lebanon*. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as *Lebanon*." And next follows the account of the diffusive benefit *Israel* should yield to others. "They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of *Lebanon* (q)." 'Religion,' as I have somewhere met with the observation, 'is like the natural heat that is radicated in the hearts of living creatures, which hath the dominion of the whole body, and sends forth warm blood and spirits, and vital nourishment into every part and member.' GOD has given us two tables of his law, one inscribed with the duties immediately respecting himself, and the other engraven with the duties that regard our neighbour; and our LORD, as he speaks in his summary,

(q) Hosea xiv. 5, 6, 7.

mary, or abridgment of the Ten Commandments, of "our loving the LORD our GOD with
 "all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with
 "all our minds, and with all our strength," so
 he tells us, that we are "to love our neighbours
 "as ourselves (r)." Holiness is not the dress of
 the LORD's day, or to be worn only at the house
 of GOD, but it is to appear upon us every day, in
 all our concerns and connections with men, and
 we are to worship GOD in his sanctuary, with
 this very view, that the beauties of holiness may
 be strengthened and increased, in order that we
 may shine brighter in our families, and in the
 world. Let me exemplify these observations,
 and shew that we are thus to fill up and adorn
 our several characters and relations. Are we
 husbands? Then are we to "love our wives,
 "even as CHRIST also loved the church, and
 "gave himself for it (s)." Are we wives? Then
 are we to "submit ourselves to our husbands in
 "the LORD (t)." Are we parents? Then are we
 to see to it that we "provoke not our children
 "to wrath, but that we bring them up in the
 "nurture and admonition of the LORD (u)." Are we children? Then let us observe what the
 word of GOD says, "Children, obey you parents
 "in the LORD, for this is right. Honour thy
 "father and mother, which is the first com-
 "mandment with promise (x)." Are we bre-
 thren or sisters? Then are we to "love as bre-
 "thren,"

(r) Mark xii. 30, 31.

(s) Eph. v. 25.

(t) Ver. 22.

(u) Eph. vi. 4.

(x) Eph. vi. 1, 2.

“thren,” and the advice of *Joseph* to his brethren is a good advice still, “See that ye fall not out by the way (y).” Are we masters? Let us remember what is enjoined us, “And ye, masters, do the same things unto your servants, forbearing threatening; knowing that your MASTER also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him (z).” Or, Are we servants? Let it not be forgotten that our duties are specified and enforced in the divine word. “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto CHRIST: not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of CHRIST, doing the will of God from the heart; with goodwill doing service, as to the LORD, and not to men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man does, the same shall he receive of the LORD, whether he be bond or free (a).” So again, in the neighbourhood where I dwell let me take heed that I am not a cypher, and much less a nuisance in it, but let me remember, that “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest,” or grave, “whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report (b),” these are to be exemplified in me, and the nearer persons dwell to me, or the more they see of me, the brighter should

(y) Gen. xlv. 24.

(z) Eph. vi. 9.

(a) Eph. vi. 5-8.

(b) Phil. iv. 8.

should these virtues shine in my connections with them, and behaviour before them. And finally, Am I a subject? Let me then "honour the King (c)," and "submit myself to the higher powers, not only for wrath," out of fear of wrath, "but for conscience sake (d)." Thus let us behave ourselves in our several characters and relations of life, studying and attending to their duties, aiming "in all things to adorn the doctrine of GOD our SAVIOUR," and taking care that "our lights so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and may glorify our heavenly FATHER (e)." Thus by an holy and exemplary conduct our religion will be like "the ointment of the right-hand that bewrays itself," and the fragrancy of holiness will accompany us whithersoever we go, and make us good husbands, wives, parents, children, brethren, sisters, masters, servants, neighbours, subjects, and citizens of mankind. "The eye that sees us will bless us," GOD and CHRIST will be honoured, and life and death will proclaim us to be saints indeed, the servants of GOD, the disciples of CHRIST, and the heirs of glory.

This undoubtedly might be the wish or prayer of the Apostle for the *Corinthians*, a spiritual and holy practice, when he desires their perfection or spiritual prosperity. He would have them to be complete christians, their heads shining with light, their hearts glowing with experience, and their hands ready for every good work, or

as

(c) 1 Peter ii. 17. (d) Rom. xiii. 1, 5. (e) Mat. v. 16.

as he exhorts the same *Corinthians*, "Therefore,"
 "my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, immove-
 "able, always abounding in the work of the
 "LORD, forasmuch as ye know that your la-
 "bour is not in vain in the LORD (*f*)."

I should now proceed to consider the reasons
 why the Apostle wished or prayed for the perfec-
 tion or spiritual prosperity of the church at *Co-*
rinth, but let this enquiry afford us another dis-
 course. In the mean time let me, in order that
 my arrows, if it be the gracious will of our God,
 may not this day drop short of their mark, en-
 deavour to give some further strength to what
 has been offered, by desiring you, as you would
 hope to enjoy this perfection, this spiritual pro-
 sperity which has been represented,

[1.] To be much in your closets. Let your
 closets be the places of your resort and choice.
 There pour out your wants and sorrows, your
 fears and doubts, your sins and temptations,
 your imperfections and weaknesses before God,
 and plead his promises, the words of his grace,
 in the name of JESUS, for your relief, and sup-
 port, your establishment, and growing holiness,
 your peace, and your joy. Commune much with
 your own hearts, and make diligent and fre-
 quent researches into your temper and conduct,
 and every thing that relates to the life and pro-
 gress of the work of GOD in your souls. Love
 solitude, and converse with God in secret; and
 come forth from your secret chambers, "like
 Q " the

(*f*) 1 Cor. xv. 58.

“ the sun from the chambers of the east, rejoicing as strong men to run your race (g),” your race of glory to your heavenly FATHER, accompanied with the lustre of holiness and justice towards men. To be indifferent to closet-devotions, and to converse little with God and our own hearts, is starving religion at the root, and then how soon will its leaves wither, and its fruits decay !

[2.] Accustom yourselves to family-prayer and family-instruction. Be the priests (I speak to you who are heads of families) of your households, and every day at the throne of grace in the name of your great Mediator, present your sacrifices of prayer for the mercies you and your families want, and the incense of praise for the mercies which you, and your families enjoy. Where you have your tent, there let your God have an altar. Be watchful over your children, and “ train them up in the way in which they “ should go,” and in your conduct towards them let there be a mixture of authority and tenderness, and let wisdom hold the balance between them. Nor let any under your roof be exempted from your pious pains and care, but as you teach your servants their duties towards you, teach them likewise their duties towards God; and in a word, as you would have the honour and blessing of *Abraham*, be ambitious to imitate his character. “ I know *Abraham*,” says the LORD himself, “ that he will command “ his children,” and not only his children, but

(g) Psalm xix. 5.

“ his household also after him, and they shall
“ keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and
“ judgment, that the LORD may bring upon *Abra-*
“ *ham* that which he hath spoken of him (*b*).”
If the *Israelites* were commanded “ diligently to
“ teach their children the words of GOD’s law,”
and the wonders of their temporal deliver-
ance (*i*), how much more should we diligently
teach our children the words of the gospel of
our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and that sal-
vation which is in him with eternal glory? For
my own part, I expect little good, little blessing
from families where family-prayer, and family-
instructions are neglected. Those families, in-
stead of being nurseries for heaven, I am afraid
will prove like “ the field of the slothful, and the
“ vineyard of the man void of understanding,
“ all grown over with thorns, and nettles co-
“ vering the face thereof, and the stone wall
“ thereof broken down (*k*).” I beseech you, my
friends, if there are any heads of families here
present, who live in the total neglect of family-
prayer, and family-instruction, that you would
seriously consider what a duty and privilege you
slight and lose, and that GOD may be provoked
to break up the hedge of his protection from
that family, where the family from week to
week, and year to year, does not so much as de-
sire it, and that the curse of barrenness may
well light upon that house where there are no
endeavours to obtain the blessing of fruitfulness.

Q 2

Though

(*b*) Gen. xviii. 19. (*i*) Deut. vi. 7. (*k*) Prov. xxiv. 30, 31.

Though it is G O D that gives the increase, yet we are to plant and water, to dig and prune, by holy prayers, advices, and instructions in our families; and “blessed are those servants, whom, “when their LORD shall come, he shall find so “doing.”

[3.] Would you enjoy spiritual prosperity, give your attendance regularly and constantly at the house of God on the LORD's day, and fill it up with the duties of godliness. Love the habitation of God's house, the place where his honour dwells, where his name is invoked, and where his blessings are dispensed. If the days on which we go out to gather our spiritual manna are neglected, or trifled away, shall we wonder if we find leanness in our souls? Let the whole LORD's day be a day of sacred rest, and sacred exercises. Gather up the very fragments of this holy time, that so nothing may be lost. You hope to spend an eternal sabbath with God and CHRIST in holy exercises and employments, let your sabbaths then be for holiness the very emblems and earnest of heaven, and learn on earth the work of eternity, and be growing more and more “meet for the inheritance “among the saints in light.” Let me add,

[4.] That if you would, christians, enjoy spiritual prosperity, beware of evil communications. “Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners (1).” If you would enjoy health of soul, do not choose those persons for

(1) 1 Cor. xv. 33.

for your companions who have the plague of sin plainly upon them. Health is no preservative against the plague, though a plague is dangerous and destructive to health. Be you "a companion of those that fear God's name," and are speaking often one to another on the things of God. Let "the saints, the excellent of the earth, be your delight." Spend your time, as much as you can here with those with whom you hope to enjoy a blessed eternity.

[5.] And lastly, Would you enjoy spiritual prosperity, be careful to shun the first approaches and tendencies to whatsoever is evil. Sin is so great an evil, and its effects so very mischievous and hurtful, that the remotest distance from it is undoubtedly your best situation. Good is the advice of the wise man, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away (*m*)."
He that would not be burnt or would not have his house consumed, ought to tread out every spark that may kindle upon himself, or upon his habitation. Conflagrations take their rise from the small seeds of fire. How good is the advice of the Apostle *Paul*, that we should "abstain from all appearance of evil (*n*)?" its very shadow, every thing that may only look like it is to be dreaded and shunned by us. And we are exhorted by another Apostle, to "hate even the garment spotted by the flesh (*o*);"
that is, we are to avoid all sin, or whatsoever may

Q 3

lead

(*m*) Prov. iv. 14, 15. (*n*) 1 Thess. v. 22. (*o*) Jude 23.

lead to it, as carefully as the *Israelites* under the law did an impure garment, that they might not be contaminated by it. Let it be a debate with some persons, whether play-houses, or cards, or dice are absolutely unlawful, or may not be used, at least in some cases, without any sin; my advice is, in doubtful points give the turn of the scale to the right side, and say, I will have nothing to do with them, as there may be a possibility of sinning by them, or as they may have a tendency, some way or another, to sin. Men do not admit of debates how near they may go to a fire without being burnt, or how far they may venture upon the edge of a precipice without falling. And let not christians curiously and idly dispute about the utmost lengths they may go, and still keep short of sin. It is best to stand off at a distance from it, and to remember, that the utmost bounds of what is lawful touches near, too near for us to venture upon it, to what is really sinful.

And now, my friends, to whom I have so often spoken, and for whose good I trust I have so long laboured, I most affectionately join with the Apostle, " And this also I wish, even your
" perfection," your spiritual prosperity in divine knowledge, experience, and practice; or let me collect the very ardor of my soul in praying for you somewhat more largely, what the Apostle does here in fewer words, but with the same meaning; " Now the GOD of peace, that
" brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the
" ever-

"everlasting covenant, make you perfect in
"every good work to do his will, working in
"you that which is well-pleasing in his sight,
"through JESUS CHRIST, to whom be glo-
"ry for ever and ever." *Amen and Amen(p).*"

(p) Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

*An HYMN, suited to the foregoing
Sermon.*

I.

LET knowledge shed its ray,
Experience warm the heart,
Then let a christian, day by day,
Perform a christian's part.

II.

Devotion, fed by love,
With purest flame should burn ;
The fire enkindled from above,
Should back to heav'n return.

III.

Let pray'r and praise be paid,
With ev'ry morn and ev'n ;
But be the largest incense made
Upon the days of heav'n.

IV.

Nor let our God alone
Have his perpetual due,
But let our kind regards be shown
To all our neighbours too.

V.

Let justice, truth, and love
Through all our actions run,
Nor let one sun, one hour remove,
Without some kindness done.

VI.

Let all that dwell beneath
Our shadow taste our fruit ;
And let our heav'nly odours breathe
The virtues of our root.

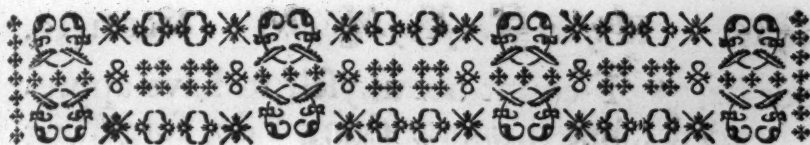
VII.

Thus, when in vales below
Our place no more is found,
We on th' eternal hills shall grow,
With fairer blossoms crown'd.



28 SE60

SERMON



S E R M O N X.

Reasons for praying for Christian
Perfection.



2 COR. XIII. 9.

*For we are glad when we are weak, and ye
are strong ; and this also we wish, even
your perfection.*

AFTER souls have been savingly
converted to GOD, have been in-
grafted into the church of CHRIST,
and become branches in him, the
true olive-tree, by a participation of
his root and fatness, there is yet much to be done
as to perseverance in the divine life, the mortifi-
cation of sin, and the advances in holiness, and
the Apostle *Paul* himself, eminent as he was,
not only for gifts, but for graces, says, that he
had " not as yet attained, neither was already
" perfect, but that he followed after, if that he
" might apprehend that for which also he was
" apprehended of CHRIST JESUS. Brethren,"
adds

adds he, " I count not myself to have apprehended ; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS (q)." We may consider the life of GOD in the soul like that of a plant. There is a time for the rooting, and there is a time for the growth and flourishing of the plant : and after we have become an holy seed or root to the LORD, by the renovation of our natures, we are to increase, improve, and abound in the life and exercises of holiness; or, as we read in holy scripture, " The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree : he shall grow like a cedar in *Lebanon*. They that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our GOD. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age : they shall be fat and flourishing (r)." And where-soever there is a minister that has a due regard to his work, who is watching over souls as one that must give an account," and who is solicitous for the spiritual prosperity of " the flock over which the HOLY GHOST has made him an overseer," such a minister will breathe forth his soul, if not in the exact language, yet for the same blessing which the Apostle here desires, " And this also we wish, even your perfection." We proposed to consider from the words,

I.

(q) Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14.

(r) Psalm xci. 12, 13, 14.

I. What is the object of the Apostle's wish or prayer; and this is the *perfection* of the church at *Corinth*. And,

II. To offer some reasons why the Apostle wished or prayed for the perfection of the church at *Corinth*.

The first head has been considered: and I now come,

II. To offer some reasons why the Apostle should wish or pray for the perfection of the church at *Corinth*. "And this also we wish, even "your perfection." And the reasons why, the Apostle, and with him all good ministers, should wish or pray for the perfection, or spiritual prosperity of the churches among whom they labour, may be such as follow.

1st, By our christian perfection or spiritual prosperity and improvement in divine knowledge, experience, and practice, we shall honour our God. True it is, that we cannot be said to honour God in any such sense as if we could increase his essential glories, or augment the happiness of him who is "the FATHER of lights," and the uncreated, inexhaustible, and eternal fountain of all perfection. "If thou be righteous, what givest thou unto him, or what receives he at thine hand? Thy wickedness "may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness
"teousness

“teousness may profit the son of man (*s*).” So again; “O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, thou art my LORD; my goodness extends not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight (*t*).” Or, “Who hath first given unto God, and it shall be recompensed unto him again (*u*)?” How apposite, and how true that passage of a very ingenious and devout writer, in which he says, ‘Should a little emmet that feels the sun-beams, lift up its head, and say, O sun, thou art warm; a creeping insect that knows nothing of the nature, the glory, the wonderful properties, operations, and effects of this prodigious and astonishing world of fire, nothing of its various and admirable motions, real or supposed, nothing of its vast circumference and greatness; yet this despicable emmet gives praise to the sun, much more than we can do to our God, much more than angels can do, more than all created nature can do; because there is some proportion between the praises of this creeping worm, and the glories of the sun; they are both finite, but the glories of our God are infinite; therefore no created praise bears any proportion.—The essential perfections of Deity are incapable of receiving the least grain of addition from all the thoughts and tongues of the intellectual world. His own idea of himself is his noblest
praise.

(*s*) Job xxxv. 7, 8. (*t*) Psalm xvi. 2, 3. (*u*) Rom. xi. 35.

‘praise †.’ But though we cannot by our most outrageous and insolent iniquity blast the divine glories, or by our most improved and eminent holiness increase the necessary, and therefore immutable perfections of the great God “over all, blessed for evermore,” any more than we can eclipse the sun by our reproaches, or improve its lustre by our praises, yet still there is a sense in which God esteems himself honoured and glorified by his saints. “Who so offers “praise, glorifies me (x).” And our LORD says, speaking of himself as a vine, his FATHER as the husbandman, and believers as the branches, “Herein is my FATHER glorified, that ye bear “much fruit (y).” The churches of JESUS CHRIST, eminent for their knowledge, their experience, and their practice, may be said to glorify GOD, as they make his glories known; for their beauties of holiness show, as by a kind of reflexion, the glories of their heavenly FATHER, as the moon and planets, irradiated by the sun, shine to the honour of that fountain of day whence they derived their light, and as it were suggest this remark to all, How glorious must that cause be, whose effect is thus glorious! And in this view we may consider that passage of the Apostle *Peter’s*, “For ye are a “chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, and a peculiar people, that ye “should show forth the praises of him who
“hath

† *Watts’s Miscellanies*, page 30, 31.

(x) Psalm l. 23.

(y) John xv. 8.

“ hath called us out of darkneſs into his marvellous light (z).” And may we not in the ſame ſenſe apply thoſe words of the Apoſtle *Paul*, “ Ye are manifeſtly declared to be the “ epiſtle of CHRIST, miniſtered by us, written “ not with ink, but with the SPIRIT of the living God; not in tables of ſtone, but in fleſhly tables of the heart (a)?” Or, we may be ſaid to glorify God by our improvements in chriſtian knowledge, experience, and practice, in that we, when thus advanced in the ſchool of CHRIST, declare the divine glories to others; that is, in our addreſſes to them, or converſation with them. We ſhall, when we are thus improved in grace, ſpeak well and worthily of God, not indeed according to his infinite excellency, but our beſt abilities; and this a condeſcending God through JESUS CHRIST will account glorifying him. Miniſters may more eſpecially be ſaid thus to glorify God, when they are in his temple ſpeaking of his glory. They glorify him when they are diſcourſing concerning his nature and perfections, his counſels and will, his law and love, his promiſes and precepts. They are then a ſweet favour of CHRIST in them that are ſaved, and in them that periſh. They are veſſels enriched with divine treaſures, “ that the excellency of the power may be of God, “ and not of them (b);” that is, that God, and not themſelves may have the glory. Nor is glorifying of God in this ſenſe confined to miniſters,

(z) 2 Peter ii. 9.

(a) 2 Cor. iii. 3.

(b) 2 Cor. iv. 7.

ters, but private christians may bear their part in it. They may be said to glorify God, when they are, as far as lies in their power, speaking honourably of him, and recommending him to the love, the admiration, the trust, and the obedience of others, or when they are giving a good testimony to his ways, his commands, his CHRIST, and his heaven. How much glory of this kind particularly may christians bring to God, when they are opening the divine excellencies, and especially the goodness of God, to their children, to their servants, or to their neighbours, as opportunity offers, and inviting them to an acquaintance with, and an interest in him, and his free and full salvation by JESUS CHRIST? Would to God that there was but more of this kind of glorifying him by a spiritual, holy, and heavenly conversation in our world; such a conversation as becomes saints, and subjects of the King of heaven! We should honour our God by a voluntary and entire oblation of ourselves, and particularly of our tongues, the "glory" of our frame (*c*), and with which particularly we are to "bless God" (*d*). "What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the HOLY GHOST, which is in you, and that ye are not your own, but are bought with a price: therefore glorify God with your body, and your spirit, which are God's (*e*)?" And now, my friends, is there this honouring God by a growing knowledge, experience, and practice?

(*c*) Psalm lvii. 8. (*d*) James iii. 9. (*e*) 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

practice? Then what an argument arises from this consideration to enforce this christian perfection upon us? Shall I glorify my GOD, or will he graciously interpret it as a glorifying him, if I am holy and unblameable in his sight, if my heart, and lip, and life are full of his praise, then let me charge it upon my soul to be “stedfast, immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the LORD (*f*).” How has he glorified me, if I am one of his people, one of his vessels of glory, and how much obligation therefore is there laid upon me, wherefore I should glorify him? If he gives me “an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory,” then let my little spark, glimmering at least in an holy and exemplary conduct, be devoted to himself, and “show forth his praise.” What should not gratitude perform in our souls? How should it urge and instigate? And if gloomy fears can drive, as with a goad, surely love should fly to duty, as on a swift and impatient wing.

2dly, By our christian perfection, or spiritual improvement in divine knowledge, experience, and practice, we may expect the most satisfying and permanent comforts, and therefore might the Apostle, and with him all good ministers, wish or pray for this spiritual perfection. Where is true comfort to be found? Is it to be found in the ways of sin, or in the ways of holiness? Can we expect to find comfort in walking con-
trary

(*f*) 1 Cor. xv. 58.

trary to GOD, in breaking his commandments, in opposing his authority, in profaning his ordinances, and living in hatred and enmity against him? For, far from all this is the real state of the matter. The way of transgressors is hard, and they may expect, as the wages of iniquity, not only the wrath and curse of GOD upon them in the world to come, but the envenomed and agonizing stings of conscience even in this world. "Their grapes," their forbidden and sinful pleasures, "are the grapes of gall, and their clusters are bitter; their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps." While, on the other hand, the closer we walk with GOD as christians, the more acquaintance we have with him, the more conformity we find to him, the more correspondence we have with him, and the more entire dependence we exercise upon him, the more we may hope we shall enjoy of his SPIRIT, and of the smiles of his love upon our souls. This, this is the way to peace, "the way of holiness;" and the more holiness we have, the more may we expect of the joys of the HOLY GHOST in our hearts, and that for this reason, the more holiness we find, the more clear may we expect that the work of renovation (the SPIRIT of GOD notwithstanding being considered as "witnessing with our spirits") will appear upon our souls, or that in proportion to the increasing beauties of holiness, we shall have brighter characters and fuller evidences that we are saints indeed; and if saints indeed,

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deed, that we are elected, justified, and have a title to the heavenly glory. What is growing holiness, but a growing proof that we are the children of God, and "if children, then" what less may we infer but that we are "heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with CHRIST?" The ways of wisdom "are ways of pleasantheſs, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retains her (g). Great peace have they," says the royal Psalmist, "that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them (h). Thou meetest him," says *Isaiah*, "that rejoices and works righteousness; those that remember thee in thy ways (i). For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly (k). He that hath my commandments," says our LORD, "and keeps them, he it is that loves me; and he that loves me, shall be loved of my FATHER, and I will love him, and I will manifest myself to him (l)." Whence is it, I speak in general, that there are so many doubts and fears among those whom we hope to be the people of GOD? Whence is it that we hear so much of a spirit of bondage, and of prevailing darkness and difficulties upon their souls, as to the safety of their state? May we not resolve these complaints into such small advances they make in

(g) Prov. iii. 17, 18. (h) Psalm cxix. 165. (i) Isa. lxiv 5.
 (k) Psalm lxxxiv. 11. (l) John xiv. 21.

in the divine life, the little mortification of sin, the little denial of the world and self, to so little prayer, to so little watchfulness, and in short to so little holiness? The best receipt for comfort that I know of is growing sanctification. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD (*m*). If holiness is the root, we may expect that joy shall be the fragrant blossom, or the mature and full-grown fruit. "The wisdom that descends from above is first pure, and then peaceable (*n*). And, "the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever (*o*). The best receipt, I say, for comfort, is growing sanctification. Not but that there may be some instances of persons "walking in darkness," who may be in deed and in truth excellent christians; for sometimes, for want of sufficiently distinguishing between the reality, and the eminency of grace, or its full growth and consummation, they may "refuse to be comforted" till they have arrived at perfection, or come very near to it, nearer to it than what most of the people of God have ever done in the present state. Such is their fear of God, such their sense of the strictness of the divine law, and such their tenderness and quick sensibility of conscience, that the least working of sin, the least inclination to what is amiss, or the least vanity, deadness, or distraction in duty, not only are a burden and affliction to their souls,

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but

(*m*) Hosea vi. 3. (*n*) James iii. 17. (*o*) Isaiah xxxii. 17.

but they are treated also as if they were such spots as were not, and could not be "the spots of God's people." Whereas, though I would by no means give the least encouragement to sin, it ought to be remembered that there is a medium between a sinner delighting and living in his sins, and a saint made perfect in glory; and this medium is the saint here on earth, who, though he partakes of the divine nature, and loves, and chooses, and pursues holiness, and breathes after heaven, yet "feels the law in his members warring against the law of his mind," and groans under the remains of corruption, and the weakness and imperfection of his graces. As there is an intermediate state, as to the body, between that of death and that of health, I mean that of sickness, so there is an intermediate state as to the soul, between its death in trespasses and sins, and its perfection in holiness. Here in this world, our hospital, we are sick, and none of us have obtained a complete cure: we must wait for this blessing till we arrive at the better world, our FATHER'S house, where only "the inhabitant shall not say he is sick; for the people," one and all, "shall be forgiven their iniquity (p)," and shall be absolutely and for ever healed of all its wounds and sores. As sinners on the one hand should beware how they conclude that they are saints, without the divine lineaments and characters of the children of God upon them, so

saints

(p) Isaiah xxxiii. 24.

saints on the other should take heed not to indulge a needless and vexatious scrupulosity, when they have the real evidences of the work of God upon them; knowing that an infant is a partaker of humanity as well as a man, and that there may be a difference as to growth and stature, where there is none in nature. However, to return from our digression; the way to peace and joy is the way of holiness. Press on, "that you may have strong consolation, and "good hope through grace" to further degrees in the divine life; watch against every rising sin, and every hurtful, however specious temptation. Hate even "the garments spotted with the "flesh." Live much in the exercises of faith, and in the works of obedience, and thus wait for the manifestation, the first-fruits, the witness of the SPIRIT, and the joyful assurances that ye "are not appointed to wrath, but to "obtain salvation through our LORD JESUS "CHRIST."

And now, to sum up all, we see that christian perfection, or spiritual improvement in divine knowledge, experience, and practice, may well be the great subject of our prayers and supplications, as this is the way to permanent and satisfying peace and joy. For, are permanent and satisfying peace and joy light matters? Or are they so common, or so easy to be found, that we need not bestow much enquiry, or take any great pains to know where to meet with them? Are they to be extracted from the clods of earth,

or does happiness grow in these regions of vicissitude and trouble? O my soul, is holiness, is christian perfection the way to peace and joy, permanent and satisfying peace and joy? Then pursue after it, and earnestly pray for it. What a pleasure will it yield to our souls to live in the unclouded evidences, and in the firm, unwavering assurance that we are the children of God? Such experience will sustain us amidst all our trials, spread a rainbow upon all the storms of life, disarm death of his gloomy terrors, and will be in our souls, when all appears as a dry and barren wilderness around us, "a well of water" "springing up into everlasting life (q)."

3dly, By our christian perfection, or spiritual improvement in divine knowledge, experience, and practice, we may hope to be of the greater service and usefulness in the world, and therefore might the Apostle, and with him may all good ministers wish or pray for spiritual perfection in the churches of JESUS CHRIST. Who are the most serviceable and useful christians? Are they such who are scarce to be discerned from sinners, such as discover little life, little zeal, little diligence, little spirituality, little conquest over this world, and little desires and tendencies after a better? Are these christians, I say, the most serviceable and useful? Far, very far is this from being the case. On the other hand, are not they the serviceable and useful christians, remarkably such, who have a deep insight into the

(q) John iv. 14.

the things of God, and a deep acquaintance with them ; such christians who discover much spiritual affection and fervor ; such christians as diffuse the full, uniform lustre and beauties of holiness over all their lives, such as are ever ready to speak and act for God, and that seem to have had a strong ray of heaven, as it were, let down into their hearts, in their spirituality, self-denial, watchfulness, benevolence, and every other grace that is ornamental to their holy profession ? These christians are the excellent of the earth, and are unspeakable blessings in it. Profane, profligate, abandoned sinners behold these “ living epistles of JESUS CHRIST,” and reverence holiness in their examples. Nay, sometimes the pious conversations and patterns of eminent christians have been the happy means of the conviction and conversion of poor sinners, as our LORD speaks ; “ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works ” and glorify your FATHER which is in heaven (r).” How have children, how have servants had everlasting reason to bless God for the instructions, admonitions, and holy and eminent walk of pious parents and masters ? Add to all this, what strength and confirmation has one saint received from the fervent prayers, animating exhortations, and sacred endeavours of another ? ‘ By good works ’ (they are the words of the *Assembly’s Confession*, in which I heartily agree) ‘ believers manifest their thankfulness,

R 4

‘ strengthen

(r) Matthew v. 16.

‘ strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren,
‘ adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the
‘ mouths of adversaries, and glorify G O D,
‘ whose workmanship they are, created in
‘ CHRIST JESUS thereunto; that, “ having their
“ fruit unto holiness, they may have the end
“ everlasting life *.” And is there not great in-
ducement, my friends, in this consideration, that
by our christian perfection, or spiritual improve-
ment in divine knowledge, experience, and prac-
tice, we may hope to be of the greater service and
usefulness in the world, why we should earnest-
ly pray for them both for ourselves and others?
To be serviceable and useful in life, to mark our
way through this world, as the sun does his
course through the heavens, by a continual com-
munication of blessings, to have the eye that
sees us to give witness to us of our worth and
benefit to mankind, and to have the ear when
it hears us, to bless us, O how desirable! And
while we circulate happiness among others,
how does it return with augmented joy into
our bosoms! And how near do we now come
to the great FATHER and fountain-head of
all good, who pours out the riches of his libe-
rality among his creatures in an unbounded
profusion, and rewards his own generous ac-
tions with the satisfaction of doing good?—
“ But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless
“ them that curse you, do good to them that
“ hate you, and pray for them who despiteful-
ly

* Chap. xvi. § 2.

“ly use you, and persecute you, that ye may be
“the children of your FATHER which is in
“heaven; for he makes his sun to rise on the
“evil and on the good, and sends rain on the
“just and on the unjust (s).” I add,

4thly and lastly, By our christian perfection,
or spiritual improvement in divine knowledge,
experience, and practice, we become more pre-
pared for the heavenly world, and therefore
might the Apostle, and with him may all good
ministers wish or pray for spiritual perfection
in the churches of CHRIST. We are here but
for a little time. A few more hours, a little more
action upon this earthly stage, and we shall be
gone, and make way for the generation that
comes after us. Time is an hasty stream, and
carries us along with it into the everlasting
gulph, and we shall shortly be no more seen by
mortal eyes, or have any concerns in all that is
done under the sun. Now how shall we be pre-
pared for our exit, and exchange of worlds,
but by growing knowledge, experience, and
practice? He is best winged for his flight, and
most meet for the inheritance on high, who
is the holiest, and has most of the temper and
spirit of heaven in his soul. “Who then is a
“faithful and wise servant, whom his LORD
“hath made ruler over his household, to give
“them meat in due season? Blessed is that ser-
“vant, whom his LORD when he comes shall
“find so doing (t).” How sad will it be to be
flumbering

(s) Matth. v. 44, 45.

(t) Chap. xxiv. 45, 46.

slumbering and sleeping, to have a dim and languishing lamp when the cry is heard, "Behold, the bridegroom comes! Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their LORD, when he will return from the wedding; that when he comes and knocks, they may open immediately (*u*)."

Are we so soon to be gone from our world, so soon as that we are not sure of a day nor an hour longer on earth? Is there only this veil of clay that separates between us and eternity? Is there only this breath that is passing and repassing to and from our nostrils, upon which our being, our continuance here below depend? Then how ready should we be, at the shortest warning, for our departure hence, and our entrance upon the eternal world that lies before us, and upon whose confines we are waiting till our great SOVEREIGN calls us thither? Can we have too much acquaintance with GOD, too near conformity to him, too close a walk with him, too much spiritual life and sensation, too much superiority to this world, and too high an elevation and communion with a better, in order that we may be in readiness for a translation to heaven, our inheritance and our home? In these things we certainly cannot exceed, and though our holiness is not the key, may I so speak, that unlocks the gates of the eternal glory, but free mercy, and redeeming merit, yet

" without

(*u*) Luke xii. 35, 36.

"without holiness no man shall see the LORD:" and this is our divine array, the wedding-garment, though the wardrobe of grace supplies it, in which we shall be presented with acceptance before GOD. What an incentive then is there for the prayer for and pursuit of christian perfection? "For if these things," spiritual knowledge, experience, and practice "be in us, and "abound, they will make us that we shall neither be barren nor unfruitful. Wherefore the "rather, brethren, give diligence to make your "calling and election sure; for if ye do these "things, ye shall never fall; for so an entrance "shall be ministred unto you abundantly into "the everlasting kingdom of our LORD and "SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST (x)." And who would not choose to launch into eternity with a full gale of assurance, and this we see may be expected in the steady and vigorous pursuit and improvement in holiness, than tremble and hesitate in his last moments, and depart from this world, though habitually, yet not actually ready for the coming of his LORD? If we would glorify and enjoy our GOD in death, and feel the darts of the last enemy broken, and his terrors brightned into peace and joy, let us abound yet more and more in holiness, and ascend higher, and yet higher still in the scale of christian perfection.

Having offered some reasons why the Apostle wished or prayed for the perfection of the church

(x) 2 Peter i. 8, 10, 11.

church at *Corinth*, I shall now conclude my discourse with some serious and practical Improvement. And,

[1.] Let us follow the example of our text, and wish and pray for christian perfection. Let us pray for this perfection for others, as the Apostle does, and especially for those churches to which we are related, and let us not forget to pray for the same blessing upon ourselves. Ambitious we may and ought to be, covetous we may and ought to be, but not for the honours of this world, not for earthly riches and possessions. Our souls should aim at nobler objects, at " the kingdom of God, and his righteousness ;" and here our ambition and eager desires will be so far from degenerating into a crime, or falling back upon ourselves in a curse, that they will be our duty and our blessing. Let holiness, growing holiness, holiness in its brightest lustre, and its highest measure, be the object of our ambition, and our importunate desires, and GOD and CHRIST will approve and commend the ambition, and the impatient thirst of the soul. " Covet earnestly," says the Apostle, " the best gifts (y)." Happy souls that are hungry and thirsting after righteousness, that are unsatisfied with any present attainments, that are eagerly desirous that their corruptions may be more and more mortified, that their imperfections may be more and more filled up, and that they may be every year, every month, and every

(y) 1 Cor. xii. 3 .

every day coming nearer and nearer to a perfection, an absolute perfection in holiness: for, though it is not in this sense to be attained on earth, yet to advance yet nearer and nearer to the summit of our happiness, is a most desirable progress, and hereby our "path will be as the shining light, that shines more and more to the perfect day (z)." Happy is the man that constantly aims high, that is sensible of his defects, and small proficiency in holiness, and means nothing less than absolute perfection. For though he, who shoots at a star elevated high in the hemisphere above him, will not be able to reach it, yet he will shoot much higher than the archer that idly points and drops his arrow upon the ground below him. Let us pray that we may be cleansed from every sin, that every "grace may be in us and abound," and that "the God of peace, who hath brought again from the dead our LORD JESUS, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, would make us perfect to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight through JESUS CHRIST (a)."

[2.] Let us wait upon GOD in the use of means for this blessing of spiritual perfection or prosperity of soul. GOD has appointed us means of grace, or channels through which his grace may be communicated to us, to enable us to die unto sin, and to live unto righteousness, and to be

(z) Prov. iv. 18.

(a) Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

be more and more strengthened to do his will, and serve and glorify him both here and hereafter. Such are the supplications, the praises, the ministry of the word, and the ordinance of his supper at the house of our God; such are reading, self-examination, and holy conversation in our closets, our families, or with one another. Let us then diligently observe these means of grace, in order that we may meet with our God in them, and may obtain some further helps in the divine life. What do we wait upon God for from time to time but to see more of his glory, to grow more like him, and to receive further communications from him as the fountain of our life and blessedness? Let us then, at the same time that we do not idolize means, or rest in them, be diligent in our attendance upon them, that we may be strengthened, established, sanctified, and comforted, and may add one degree of grace to that of another, till we shall appear perfect before God in *Zion*.

[3.] In what a sad condition are those souls who are destitute of this spiritual knowledge, experience, and practice! They know little or nothing concerning GOD, or CHRIST, or themselves, or what knowledge they have has never descended into their hearts, but idly floats upon the surface of the soul, when it should penetrate, dwell, and reign there in a home-felt experience, and application of divine truths; and their lives, instead of being a clear refulgent mirror of divine truth and holiness, are desti-

tute

tute of the power and beauties of godliness, and awfully declare that they are "alienated from the life of God," and are "at enmity against him by wicked works." Wretched souls these! How inconceivably wretched! They have never been born again, they have never been made partakers of a divine nature, and they are upon the brink of everlasting perdition. O that they would duly consider what things they are that enter into the constitution of a christian, spiritual knowledge, spiritual experience, and spiritual practice, and "now in this their day attend to the things that belong to their everlasting peace, before they are hid from their eyes!" O that they might see where christianity lies, as quite a distinct thing from mere profession, forms, speculations, or controversies, nothing less than a living principle of holiness seated in the heart! And O that their wills and affections may receive the powerful impressions, and indelible stamp and image of divine truths, that so their lives may be consecrated to the divine service and glory, and their souls may be "made meet for the inheritance among the saints in light; so that whether they live, they may live unto the LORD; or whether they die, they may die unto the LORD: so that whether living or dying they may be the LORD's (b)." I add,
[4.] And lastly, Let us long for heaven, where we shall be absolutely and eternally perfect. There "that which is perfect shall come, and
" that

(b) Rom. xiv. 8.

“ that which is in part shall be done away (c).” We are said to “ come to the spirits of just men “ made perfect (d).” Happy state ! when the seeds of holiness now sown in us shall arrive to a maturity that shall never decay ! Here we are aiming and longing to be christians, trying to get higher and higher in the ascent of godliness, but we are not making the advance we could wish, and sometimes it may be, sliding and falling back ; but in heaven we shall be christians indeed, and shall have purged off every stain of sin, and shall have filled up every defect in holiness. We “ shall behold God’s face in righteousness, and “ shall be satisfied awaking in his likeness (e).” The LORD prepare us for that better world ! The LORD water and watch over us in his nursery of grace, his church below, that we “ being “ planted in his house, may flourish in his “ courts, may bring forth fruit even in old “ age (f),” and may be ready for a transplantation into his paradise above, there on the heavenly hills, with the rivers of life at our roots, and under the benign influences of our God, our unclouded and eternal Sun, to flourish in perfect beauty and immortal vigour ! *Amen and Amen !*

(c) 2 Cor. xii. 10. (d) Heb. xii. 23. (e) Psalm xvii. 15.

(f) Psalm xcii. 13, 14.





*An HYMN, suited to the
foregoing Sermon.*

I.

Perfection, LORD, is what we pray
With one united voice :
O grant that gift without delay,
And make our hearts rejoice !

II.

Thus we, with thine own SPIRIT fill'd,
And with thy beauties crown'd,
To thee perpetual praise shall yield,
And spread thy glories round.

III.

Thine image on our hearts shall prove
That we are surely thine,
While faith, and hope, and joy, and love,
Attest the work divine.

IV.

Our houses, kindred, neighbours too,
And ev'n our foes, shall see
How well the sacred works we do
With sacred vows agree.

V.

So spicy groves their odours breathe
Redundant through the air,
And heav'n above, and earth beneath
Th' unbounded pleasures share.

VI.

Thus blessing, and thus blest our souls
Shall stand prepar'd for flight,
To realms where full salvation rolls
In rivers of delight.

VII.

He who is form'd a child of God
In lineaments divine,
Shall in his FATHER's blest abode
In endless glory shine.



28 SE60

SERMON



S E R M O N XI.

Glorying in the Cross of CHRIST
explained.

G A L A T. VI. 14.

*G O D forbid that I should glory, save in the
cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.*

MON
N O W very different are the objects in
H which different persons glory? Some
men glory in their strength, the beau-
ty, the comely proportion, the maje-
stic stature, the firm nerve, the robust limb, or
the rosy bloom which youth and health, tran-
sient youth and precarious health have bestow-
ed upon their bodies of clay. Others glory in
their riches, or the treasures of gold and silver
they have amassed together, and which they false-
ly as well as proudly call their own. Others glo-
ry in their honours, in the elevation to which
they are raised above their fellow-worms, whom,
S 2 though

though companions with themselves on the same mole-hill of earth, yet they view with, it may be, a supercilious disdain, as groveling in a lower situation and rank to themselves. Others boast themselves of their learning and philosophical attainments, and are ready to fancy themselves a distinct and superior order of beings from the bulk of mankind, because they have gathered up a larger heap of the fragments into which language was crumbled at the confusion of *Babel*, or know something more of the extent and laws of the universe, than what falls to the lot of the generality of the children of *Adam*: nay, so fond does the human nature appear to be of glorying, that rather than have nothing of which to glory, some men will “glory in their shame (g).” And not only are there various objects in which persons glory, but the very same persons at different times have very different, and indeed very contrary objects of glorying. A remarkable instance of this kind we have in the Apostle *Paul*. See him keeping the clothes of the inhuman murderers of *Stephen*: see him haling men and women to prison for their faith in CHRIST: hear him blaspheming the Name of JESUS, and compelling others to blaspheme: behold him persecuting and making havock with the Church of CHRIST, like some ravenous and destructive wild beast, and view him when breathing threatnings and slaughter against the disciples of CHRIST, and
you

you would little imagine that this person should say, as in our text, but "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST." But so it was, his mind was changed, the veil, or rather the scales of ignorance were taken off from his understanding, his inclinations and affections were directed and turned into a contrary channel, and *Saul* the persecutor, the blasphemer, the rigid Pharisee, the furious bigot, and implacable enemy to the gospel of JESUS CHRIST, was now become *Paul* the Apostle, the preacher, the believer, the servant, the votary of that same JESUS, whom he once so much contemned and abhorred, and from a devouring wolf, was transformed into a peaceful lamb of that flock which belonged to JESUS, "the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls." But the revolution in his mind, and the change in the object of his glorying cannot be better described than in his own words. "If any man," says he, "thinks he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more; circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of *Israel*, of the tribe of *Benjamin*, an *Hebrew* of the *Hebrews*, as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I counted loss for CHRIST. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS my LORD: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do

“ count them but dung that I may win CHRIST,
 “ and be found in him, not having mine own
 “ righteousness, which is of the law, but that
 “ which is through the faith of CHRIST, the
 “ righteousness which is of GOD by faith : that
 “ I may know him, and the power of his re-
 “ surrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings,
 “ being made conformable unto his death (*b*).”

And a similar change to that which passed upon the mind of the Apostle, as to the object of his glorying, may have passed, I trust, upon some, at least, of our minds. Once we were ready, it may be, to glory in this or the other earthly trifle and enjoyment, as separated from our GOD ; and the bubbles of ambition, the dirt of avarice, or the empty vapours of sensitive, and, it may be, forbidden pleasures, these allured our hearts, and were the things that we blasphemously erected into idols, and worshipped in the room of the true GOD, the infinite and eternal good, and the only rightful owner, and all-sufficient portion of the soul. Or, it may be, we gloried in our moral refinements and superiority of conduct to the gross and impure herd of sinners, and thought ourselves safe and happy, because we saw them deeper plunged in pollution, and imagined that they were farther from GOD and holiness than ourselves. But now we are taught, such is the revolution that has taken place in our minds by the influences of divine power and grace, not to glory in earth,
 not

(*b*) Phil. iii. 4—11.

not to glory in any sublunary good, not to glory in ourselves, or the twinkling and imperfect glimmers of our own righteousness as our title to heaven ; but, on the other hand, we have learned to glory in the cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and make that the centre of our hope and our trust, our present triumph and our future happiness.

In discoursing upon the words, " GOD forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST," I shall,

I. Consider what we may understand by glorying. And,

II. I shall shew you in what the Apostle gloried. " GOD forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST."

I. I shall consider what we are to understand by glorying. And by glorying we may understand,

1st, That we have a regard and esteem for the object in which we glory. How incongruous and absurd to suppose that a man should glory in what has no share or interest in his affections! If a man glories in his strength, it is because he has a high value for it ; and the like may be said of glorying in beauty, riches, honours, the delights of sense, and every thing that may have the appearance and allurements of desirableness and excellency in it. Men do

not glory, do not exult, do not triumph, but when they have something they account good, and by their glorying in it, they demonstrate their esteem for the object which calls forth this pleasure or rather transport of soul. What a fast hold had riches and honours of the heart of *Haman*? Nay, how entirely and absolutely had they possessed it, when he glories in them in language that showed at once the pride and the exultation of his spirit? “And *Haman* told them,” *i. e.* his friends, “and *Zeresh* his wife, of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the King had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the prince and servants of the King (*i*).” In like manner what a high value must *Nebuchadnezzar* set upon the pomp and splendor of human greatness, when in the undue, and indeed uncreaturally elevation and triumph of his spirit, he cries out, “Is not this great *Babylon* that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty (*k*)?” Without an esteem for an object, there is no glorying in it: men glory not in what they dislike, but in what they value.

2dly, When we speak of glorying in an object, it is implied that we have, or at least that we apprehend that we have an interest in it. In the just-mentioned instances we may observe, that

(*i*) Esther vi. 13.

(*k*) Dan. iv. 30.

that *Haman* and *Nebuchadnezzar* gloried in wealth and eminence, because they were their own. Had the wealth or the eminence belonged to others, and not themselves, they would not have gloried but envied, and it was their propriety, their interest in all this affluence and grandeur that swelled their vain hearts into such triumph and exultation. Who glories in that which he has not, or apprehends himself not to have? And is it not possession, real or imaginary, that kindles this passion of glorying in the soul? *My* strength, *my* abundance, *my* honours, *my* abilities, *my* learning, are the causes of my glorying, and let them but be once conceived as not my own, and my glorying expires of course, as a lamp that has no oil to feed and nourish its flames.

3. When we speak of glorying in an object, we may understand that we not only take pleasure in it, but that the pleasure is strong and vigorous. If we say that a man glories in this or the other worldly emolument or distinction above his fellow-creatures, what do we intend but that he rejoices and exults in it, or that it fills him with transport, or an exceeding great and superlative joy? The very learned and pious commentator *Beza* gives this sense of the word *glorying*, in his notes on *Rom. v. 2.* where speaking of *glorying*, as it is in the original, though our translators render it "*rejoicing in*" hope of the glory of God," he says, "We not only possess a composure of mind, and are set free

‘ free from all fear of damnation, but we are
 ‘ firmly assured of the forgiveness of our sins
 ‘ by the blood of CHRIST, and thence are filled
 ‘ with secret joy, and exult in the prospect of
 ‘ that heavenly inheritance which is prepared
 ‘ for us†.’ And the same excellent expositor,
 descanting upon the passage before us, says, that
 ‘ this word *glorying*, when used in a good sense,
 ‘ does not signify to attribute any thing to one’s
 ‘ self, as is the case with proud persons, but to
 ‘ acquiesce in the object of our glorying, and
 ‘ that not without an exultation of heart§.’
 Glorying in an object is to triumph in it. The
 object in which we glory opens, as it were, all
 the springs of joy in our breasts, and like a ri-
 ver or ocean overflowing its banks or shores,
 possesses, and in a manner swallows up the soul.
 Let me add,

4thly and lastly, When we speak of glorying
 in any object, we may include the declaration of
 our regards to it, and exultation in it in the
 hearing of others. If this is not always, and in
 every instance the case, yet how usual is it for
 us to express our glorying to others? So says the
 Apostle to the *Corinthians*, “ I know the for-
 wardness of your mind, for which I boast,”

or

† *Id est, non solum æquo animo sumus, & ab omni damnationis ti-
 more liberi, imo de peccatorum remissione per CHRISTI sanguinem cer-
 tiorati, & inde magna lætitia perfusi exultamus de hæreditate cœlesti
 quæ nos manet.* — BEZA in locum.

§ *Hoc verbum apud Paulum, cum in laude ponitur, non significat
 sibi aliquid tribuere, ut superbi solent, sed in aliqua re acquiescere, idque
 non sine animi exultatione.* — BEZA in locum.

or as the word is in the original, "for which
 " I GLORY of you to them of *Macedonia* (l);"
 ' i. e. I speak of you to them with exultation.'
 " Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth
 " speaketh," and joy, exceeding great and trans-
 porting joy will find a vent for itself at our lips,
 and others, our neighbours, our friends, and fam-
 ilies, will hear from our tongues what delight-
 ful sensations possess and ravish our hearts. " My
 " soul," says the Psalmist, " shall make her
 " boast in the LORD, and the humble shall
 " hear thereof, and be glad (m)." Great joys
 are like strong inward fires, and no wonder that
 they break their way, and expand themselves in
 flames. " My heart," says the Psalmist, " was
 " hot within me: while I was musing, the fire
 " burned, then spake I with my tongue (n)."

Such then I apprehend is the nature of glory-
 ing. By glorying is implied that we have a re-
 gard and esteem for the object in which we glory;
 by glorying is signified that we have, or that we
 apprehend that we have an interest in the ob-
 ject in which we glory; by glorying it is under-
 stood that our pleasure is strong and vigorous;
 and in glorying we may include a declaration
 of the joys we feel, in the hearing of others.

Let us now apply the description we have
 given of glorying in its general nature to the
 instance of the Apostle *Paul*, as glorying in the
 cross of his LORD JESUS CHRIST. How did that
 holy

(l) 2 Cor. ix. 2. (m) Psal. xxxiv. 2. (n) Psal. xxxix. 3.

holy and excellent man in each of these particulars glory in the cross of his LORD JESUS CHRIST? What regard and esteem had he for the cross of his LORD JESUS CHRIST? A crucified SAVIOUR, JESUS the propitiation and atonement, how precious and transcendently excellent and glorious was this truth to his soul? "But we preach," says he, "CHRIST crucified, unto the *Jews* a stumbling-block, and to the *Greeks* foolishness, but unto them which are called, both *Jews* and *Greeks*, CHRIST the power of GOD, and the wisdom of GOD (o)." And again, "For I am determined to know nothing among you, save JESUS CHRIST, and him crucified (p)." And he tells us, that he was "crucified with CHRIST (q)." He was "crucified with CHRIST," what may this expression denote? Not that he was really and actually crucified with CHRIST, or hung upon the cross with him, but we may understand the Apostle as intending that he was so frequent in the meditation, in the exercises of faith upon JESUS CHRIST crucified, and his heart was so powerfully drawn by that magnet, the cross of CHRIST, that it was to him as if he was crucified with CHRIST, so that wherever he was, or whatever he was about, he was never out of the sight of the cross of CHRIST, and was oftentimes, and especially in every prayer, in every visit to the throne of grace, taking shelter and refuge under it. Such were the regard and esteem

(o) 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

(p) 1 Cor. ii. 2.

(q) Gal. ii. 20.

esteem the holy Apostle had for the cross of his LORD JESUS CHRIST. And add to this, that the Apostle had a comfortable persuasion that he had an interest in the cross of his LORD JESUS CHRIST, or that he was washed in the blood of atonement that was shed there, and that the fruits which grew from that tree, the cross of CHRIST, (however barren, ignominious, and accursed it might seem to an eye of sense) and which were designed "for the healing of the nations," were the fruits on which he fed by faith, and were the life and joy of his soul. Alas! how little comfort, or how little incentive to holiness shall we find from the cross of CHRIST, if we go no further than the mere belief that CHRIST died for sinners! But when we eat by faith of CHRIST's flesh, and drink of his blood, when we apply and appropriate "the redemption which is in CHRIST" to ourselves, and when we can say with a good hope at least, as *Thomas*, "My LORD, and my GOD," then indeed our souls have joy, then we may indeed glory in CHRIST JESUS, and bless and adore our God for salvation through his SON, salvation that has reached our own souls, and has turned our "wilderness into a fruitful field, and our valley of darkness, and the shadow of death, into light and life in the LORD." And you will observe how the Apostle *Paul* in particular discovers the delightful sense he had of his propriety in the REDEEMER's merits from the two following passages in his Epistles. "This," says he,

he, "is a faithful saying, and worthy of all ac-
 ceptation, that CHRIST JESUS came into the
 world to save sinners, of whom I am chief;
 howbeit," adds he, "for this cause I obtain-
 ed mercy;" "it was mercy I had for myself
 it was mercy I experienced alone, nor did any
 stranger intermeddle in the joy; it was mercy
 not in a general proclamation, but mercy in a
 personal experience; it was mercy directed
 and centred upon my own soul, like the rays
 of the sun collected in a burning-glass, and
 thence struck in their transforming energy
 upon their object: "for this cause I obtain-
 ed mercy, that in me first JESUS CHRIST
 might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pa-
 tern to them who should hereafter believe in
 him to life everlasting (r)." So again in a pas-
 sage cited before, "I am crucified," says the
 Apostle, "with CHRIST, nevertheless I live, yet
 not I, but CHRIST liveth in me, and the life
 which I now live in the flesh, I live by the
 faith of the SON of GOD, who loved me, and
 gave himself for me (s):" not who loved and
 gave himself for sinners in the general, but he
 loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*," as one of
 "the brands" that he has actually "plucked
 from the everlasting burnings," as one of the
 certain trophies of his cross, and which he will
 own as such, in the day of his second appear-
 ance.

Further

(r) 1 Tim. i. 15,

(s) Gal. ii. 20.

Further, do we not find that the Apostle had not only a regard and esteem for the 'cross of CHRIST, and that he not only considered himself as having an interest in its blessings, but that he also felt a very strong and vigorous pleasure from this blessed doctrine, the doctrine of a crucified SAVIOUR, thus received and applied by him? What pleasure, what an exceeding great pleasure did the cross of CHRIST give to his soul, since at that cross he beheld the sword of justice turned from himself, and ceasing its inquisition for his own blood, by bathing itself in the blood of his Surety, since there he saw the law of GOD magnified, the glories of GOD as a Governor and Judge supported and illustrated, and yet mercy reigning, reigning not only to the extinction of the curse, but "reigning to eternal life;" and this mercy, as the mercy that was manifested to him, that forgave, accepted, and saved him from all the miseries of hell into all the glories and felicity of heaven, which were his even now in title, though not in actual possession; and hence was the Apostle's heart filled no doubt "with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Add further, that this exceeding great pleasure which the Apostle gathered from the cross of CHRIST, from the wonders and salvation displayed and enjoyed there was declared, publicly and constantly declared by him to others. He did not hide this truth, and the blessedness springing from it from others, but went round the nations to

to proclaim it all abroad, that his fellow-creatures, fellow-sinners, and fellow-immortals, might hear the doctrine of a crucified JESUS, and might be partakers of the salvation which is in him with eternal glory. The Apostle says of himself, that he “was made a minister of
“ the gospel, according to the gift of the grace
“ of God given unto him by the effectual working of his power, and that to him who was
“ the least of all saints was this grace given, that
“ he should preach among the *Gentiles* the unsearchable riches of CHRIST (*t*).” And again he tells us, that “it pleased GOD, who separated
“ him from his mother’s womb, and called
“ him by his grace, to reveal his SON in him,
“ that he might preach him among the heathen (*u*).” And as the Apostle was thus appointed and commissioned to preach the gospel, so he discharged his office with the utmost fidelity and zeal, and how did the world, as it were, resound with the declaration of a crucified SAVIOUR from his lips, so that *Jews* and *Gentiles*, wise philosophers, as they thought themselves, and the illiterate multitude, alike heard him proclaiming the tidings of CHRIST and him crucified, and preaching the glories of the cross. He was “a chosen vessel to bear the name of
“ JESUS before the *Gentiles*, and Kings, and the
“ children of *Israel* (*x*).” And the treasure put into his vessel he freely and every where communicated for the enriching and blessing the world,

(*t*) Eph. iii. 7.(*u*) Gal. i. 15.(*x*) Acts ix. 15.

world; and how many souls have had eternal reason to thank and praise the LORD for the preaching and writings of this Apostle of the *Gentiles*, in the last of which we still hear him glorying in CHRIST JESUS, making his boast in him, and recommending him to the faith and hope of guilty, perishing souls? In these respects then, in all the particulars included in the nature of glorying, we evidently see that the Apostle gloried in the cross of his LORD JESUS CHRIST. And thus let us, my friends, glory in the cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. Let this be the object of our regard and esteem; let us be solicitous that we may have our interest in it; let us view the cross of CHRIST with the highest delight; and let us declare to others the joys we feel in a crucified SAVIOUR, our refuge, our shield, the Author of our present comfort, and of our everlasting life and glory. We need a crucified SAVIOUR as much as the Apostle did. "There is no other Name given under heaven whereby we can be saved(y)," and this declaration remains an incontestible immutable truth in all generations: in JESUS therefore let us glory, and on his cross, as it were, hang the whole weight of our immortal interests; for "blessed are all they that put their trust in him(z)."

Having considered what we may understand by glorying, I come,

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II. To

(y) Acts iv. 12.

(z) Psalm ii. 12.

II. To shew you in what the Apostle gloried. "GOD forbid," says he, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST."

It may seem strange, that the Apostle should declare that he gloried in the cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. May it not be said, what is there to afford a proper cause of glorying in the cross of CHRIST? It was a cross of shame and pain, a cross that was in itself a cruel punishment, and rendered the person that suffered upon it an execration and a curse. On this cross JESUS CHRIST was treated as the poorest of slaves, and the vilest of malefactors. What then was there in the cross of CHRIST in which to glory? Rather let its reproaches, its agonies and death, be buried in everlasting oblivion. Tell it not in *Rome*, publish it not at *Athens*. This cross of CHRIST must be not only "to the Jews a stumbling-block," but "to the Greeks foolishness (a)." If the Apostle would glory in CHRIST, rather let him glory in his divinity, in his dignity and happiness with the FATHER before all worlds, or let him glory in his resurrection, in his ascension, or his exaltation at the right hand of the majesty of the power on high, but let him not glory in the cross of CHRIST. The day in which CHRIST was crucified, was so much dishonoured and vilified, let it not be heard

(a) 1 Cor. i. 30.

heard of any more. Let us say of it as *Job* does of the day of his birth; "Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it, let the blackness of the day terrify it. As for that night, let darkness seize upon it, let it not be joined to the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months (b)." But notwithstanding all that may be objected of this kind against glorying in the cross of CHRIST, yet the Apostle declares that he would glory in the cross of his LORD JESUS CHRIST, and this principally and eminently, in such a superlative degree as to make all other glorying void, and indeed a mere nothing in comparison with his exultation in the cross of CHRIST. "God forbid," says he, or rather, as the expression might be better rendered, 'Let it not be, by no means, upon no account whatever, I abhor the thought,' "that I should glory" in any thing, "save in the cross of CHRIST." And now what is there that may afford a sufficient rational ground of glorying in the cross of CHRIST, first to the Apostle, and afterwards to all true christians and believers upon him in every age? Much appears upon the outward view of the matter, why there should be no glorying in the cross of CHRIST: we should be glad to hear upon a maturer consideration, and a more accu-

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rate

(b) *Job* iii. 4.

rate enquiry into the point, what possible reason can be assigned why the Apostle, and after him all the disciples of CHRIST in every age should glory in his cross? And there are several reasons that may be rendered why the Apostle, and after him all true christians, should glory in the cross of CHRIST, though only one of them can in the present discourse be examined and discussed by us.

1st, The Apostle *Paul*, and after him all true christians, might glory in the cross of CHRIST for its most august and wonderful display of the divine perfections. Behold the cross of CHRIST: Turn aside, and carry your contemplations to *Calvary*, and see the cross of CHRIST, and the wonders of heaven displayed there. Here is CHRIST the SON of GOD, he who "was" "in the beginning with GOD, and" himself "was GOD, GOD over all, blessed for ever—" more; the brightness of the FATHER's glory, "and the express image of his person; he who" "made the worlds, and by whom all things" "consist," and who has "taken upon him" "our flesh," and is now "found in fashion as" "a man," in the reality of flesh, and "in the" "likeness of sinful flesh"—here is this CHRIST, this EMMANUEL, suffering and dying with every mark of infamy and cruelty. He is rejected by his own nation, he is condemned to death by the *Roman* Governor, and led out to execution through the gates of *Jerusalem*; his back is torn with the scourge, his head is pierced with thorns,

thorns, his body is fastened to the cross with nails, he is hung up between two thieves, he is mocked and insulted, and to complete his sufferings, his FATHER forsakes him in the depth of his distress, and leaves him to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and thus the glorious SON, and the immaculate LAMB of GOD expires as abhorred and abandoned both of heaven and earth, as the offscouring of all things, and the most flagitious and execrable criminal in the universe. And wherefore is all this? Is it for sin that he had committed? Has extraordinary wickedness in himself brought on him this immeasurable distress? By no means, he is the holy One of GOD, he "is without sin, and no guile is found in his mouth; he is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" his heart, while he was here on earth, was an altar burning in one perpetual sacrifice of duty and devotion to his heavenly FATHER, and of the tenderest compassion and benevolence to men, and his whole life was an unsullied mirror of every grace and virtue that could be acceptable to GOD, or profitable to our world, and sooner might the sun be conceived to be the seat of darkness, or to have its pure beams debased and contaminated with impurity, than that JESUS CHRIST, the SON of GOD, should be stained with the least suspicion or appearance of sin. Wherefore then was it, that CHRIST was thus crucified and slain, and that such an inundation of misery broke in upon him

him, as that he might well say, "Behold and see
 " if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow?"
 Let the scripture that acquaints us with the
 fact, explain to us the cause. And the same scrip-
 ture assures us, that CHRIST was made a sa-
 crifice, or a ransom for us, or that in our place,
 or on our account he was covered with this cloud
 of infamy, and endured all these agonizing sor-
 rows. "Surely," says the evangelical Prophet,
 "he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sor-
 " rows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smit-
 " ten of God, and afflicted. But he was wound-
 " ed for our transgressions, he was bruised for
 " our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace
 " was upon him, and by his stripes we are heal-
 " ed. All we like sheep have gone astray: we
 " have turned every one to his own way, and
 " the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of
 " us all." So again; "It pleased the LORD to
 " bruise him, he hath put him to grief; — He
 " shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be
 " satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous
 " servant justify many: for he shall bear their
 " iniquities (c). For what the law could not do,"
 says St Paul, "in that it was weak through the
 " flesh, God" has done in "sending his own Son
 " in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin con-
 " demned sin in the flesh (d)." And again the same
 Apostle, "For he," that is the FATHER, "hath
 " made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin
 " that we might be made the righteousness of
 " God"

(c) Isaiah liii. 5, 6—10.

(d) Rom. viii. 3.

"GOD in him (e)." And he declares, that "CHRIST is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth (f)." The Apostle *Peter* testifies the same truth, "Who," that is CHRIST, "bare our sins in his own body on the tree (g)." Such then, according to the easy sense of scripture, is the end why our LORD was crucified and slain, why this SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS set in such a cloud, and in such an horror of thick darkness: it was that he might be a sacrifice for us, or that he might "put away our sins by the sacrifice of himself (b)." And if this was the end why the cross of CHRIST was erected, and the glorious EMMANUEL was hung upon it, there to bleed and groan and die for our sakes, as abhorred of earth, and deserted of heaven, then let us behold at the cross of CHRIST the most august and wonderful exhibition of the divine perfections. As to the holiness of GOD, how gloriously is it manifested, in that the curse of the law due to transgression shall not be stopped, shall not be extinguished, but descend in its full force, though not upon the head of the offender, yet upon the head of the SURETY in his place? And what procedure of deity can more tend to shew the abhorrence of GOD against sin, or to evidence that he is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity?" As to the truth of GOD, how illustriously is this attribute displayed at the cross of CHRIST, in that

T 4 as

(e) 2 Cor. v. 21. (f) Rom. x. 4. (g) 1 Peter ii. 24.

(b) Heb. ix. 26.

as God has declared that "indignation, and
"wrath, and tribulation, and anguish" are the
punishment due to offenders, so at this cross the
divine denunciation is verified, and is so far
from dying away in a vain sound, that it is ac-
tually put into execution, our LORD becoming
a curse for us, and bearing that vengeance which
was the penalty awarded against us, and was the
awful, though righteous wages of our sins. As
to the justice of God, in what tremendous ma-
jesty do the rays of that attribute break forth at
the cross of CHRIST, in that GOD will de-
monstrate to his intelligent creatures, that it is
no light matter fundamentally to overturn the
equitable constitution established between him-
self and his creatures, but that he will have it
seen and known to all to whom his transactions
with men are revealed, to the worlds around us,
that sin shall not be forgiven without a sacrifice,
and that no less a sacrifice shall be made and
accepted for this purpose, than that of his own
beloved SON, the "EMMANUEL, GOD with us."
Thus the Apostle says, that "we are justified
"freely by his grace through the redemption
"that is in JESUS CHRIST, whom God hath
"set forth for a propitiation through faith in
"his blood, to declare his righteousness in the
"remission of sins that are past, through the
"forbearance of GOD; to declare, I say, at
"this time his righteousness, that he might be
"just, and the justifier of him who believes in
JESUS

“JESUS (i).” And shall we overlook, or is it possible that we should overlook the mercy of God shining out in its mildest, fullest glory at the cross of CHRIST? What mercy was it that we were not left to perish in our guilt, and to reap the dreadful harvest of sorrow and despair according to what we had so plentifully sown of the seeds of sin? What kindness was it that there was such provision made to prevent us from sinking into endless perdition, under the weight of that vengeance our crimes had deserved? What amazing grace is it, that God should “not spare his own SON, but freely give him up for us all (k)!” and that to so cruel and so ignominious a death, and all to procure our pardon and salvation? With how much reason may we adopt the language of scripture, that “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD (l). God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten SON, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (m). In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten SON into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his SON to be a propitiation for

(i) Rom. iii. 24.

(k) Rom. viii. 32.

(l) Rom. v. 20.

(m) John iii. 16.

“ for our sins(*n*). God commendeth his love to-
 “ wards us,” he confirms*, or gives the amplest proofs of his love towards us, “ in that
 “ while we were yet sinners, CHRIST died for
 “ us(*o*).” And may not I add, as a glory resulting from these confederate glories of holiness, truth, justice, and mercy, that we may at the cross of CHRIST observe the glory of the divine wisdom? What wisdom must that be, how deep and unsearchable, that could find an expedient thus to unite and centre the divine attributes, to preserve their rights inviolable, and their honours immaculate, nay to make them shine forth in concert with each other in a splendor and majesty unknown before? All this display of the divine attributes our admiring souls behold at the cross of CHRIST; and may we not apply the language of the Psalmist upon this great event with a little variation, and say,
 “ Surely his salvation is nigh unto them that
 “ fear him,” it is brought down into our world, it is exhibited in our world on Mount *Calvary*, in the sufferings and death of the divine REDEEMER there; “ that glory,” it is added,
 “ might dwell in our land,” that “ glory to
 “ GOD in the highest” in his “good-will towards
 “ men, might dwell in our land? Mercy and
 “ truth are met together, righteousness and
 “ peace,” holiness, justice, and grace “ have
 “ kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of
 “ the earth, and righteousness shall look down
 “ from

(*n*) 1 John iv. 9, 10, * *Συνίστησι*. (*o*) Rom. v. 8.

“from heaven (*p*).” Upon the whole, how justly might the Apostle *Paul*, and after him all true christians, glory in the cross of CHRIST for its most august and wonderful display of the divine perfections?

I should now proceed to consider some other reasons why the Apostle, and with him all true christians, should glory in the cross of CHRIST; but those reasons may be the matter of another discourse.

Let me subjoin a very apposite passage of a late excellent minister and servant of JESUS CHRIST, Mr *McLaurin*, in a discourse that he has left us upon our text. ‘Though all the light ‘in the world,’ says he, ‘in the sun and stars ‘were collected together into one stupendous ‘mass of light, it would be but darkness to the ‘glory of this seemingly dark and melancholy ‘object, a crucified JESUS, for it is here that “we all as with open face behold as in a glass “the glory of the LORD (*q*).” ‘Here shine ‘spotless justice, incomprehensible wisdom, and ‘infinite love all at once. None of them darkens or eclipses the other, every one of them ‘gives a lustre to the rest. They mingle their ‘beams, and blaze with united eternal splendour. The just JUDGE, the merciful FATHER, ‘and the wise GOVERNOR. No other objects ‘give such a display of all these perfections, yea, ‘all the objects we know give not such a display ‘of

(*p*) Psalm lxxxv. 9.

(*q*) 2 Cor. iii. 18.

‘ of any one of them. No where does justice
 ‘ appear so awful, mercy so amiable, or wisdom
 ‘ so profound.’ “ O the depth of the riches,
 “ both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
 “ how unsearchable are his judgments, and his
 “ ways past finding out ! For of him, and
 “ through him, and to him are all things, to
 “ whom be glory for ever. *Amen* (r).”

(r) Rom. xi. 33—36.



*An H Y M N, suited to the
 foregoing Sermon.*

I.

WHile these of strength and beauty tell,
 And those how they in wealth excel,
 And others count their glories o'er,
 Or boast their philosophic store :

II.

The cross of CHRIST is all my theme,
 This draws my honour and esteem ;
 And twice ten thousand worlds were vain,
 Weigh'd with its rich, eternal gain.

III.

An int'rest here is all my scope ;
 This kindles my celestial hope ;
 This makes the painful tracts I go,
 With lustre smile, with roses blow.

IV.

IV.

Thy cross, my SAVIOUR, and my KING;
My soul in tuneful praise shall sing;
Under its shelter safe I dwell,
And there defy the pow'rs of hell.

V.

While breath remains, the world around
Shall with the wond'rous grace resound,
And this immeasurable love
Shall fill th' eternity above.



SERMON

IV.

Thy cross, my SAVIOUR, and my KING,
My soul is tuned to praise shall sing;
Under its shelter safe I dwell,
And there defy the pow'rs of hell.

V.

While breath remains, the world around
Shall with the wondrous grace respond;
And this unmeasurable love
Shall fill th' eternity above.

28 SEP 60

SERMON



S E R M O N XII.

The Christian's Reasons for glorying
in the Cross of CHRIST.



GALAT. VI. 14.

*GOD forbid that I should glory, save in the
cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST; by
whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto
the world.*

THE damage that the great and no-
ble nature of man has sustained
by sin, lies not in the extinction of
the affections, but their debasement
from high and suitable objects to
such as are altogether low and unworthy. How
evident is this truth, and how much do we see
it verified in our world in covetous, ambi-
tious and voluptuous persons? Were their desires
and eager pursuits called off from glittering
clay, empty bubbles, and gross and transient
delights,

delights, to "the riches in glory by CHRIST JESUS," to the applauses of GOD and their own consciences, and to "the fulness of joy in GOD's presence, and the everlasting pleasures at his right hand," we should find them restored to themselves, we should find them such, at least in some good degree, as they ought to be, and the affections of the high-descended spirit would no longer be wasted upon vanities, but aspire upwards, and fix upon their proper and satisfying rest and portion. Let it be your and my concern, my friends, that the affections of our souls, however degenerate and depraved they have been in former days, may now embrace real, and not shadowy, permanent, and not fleeting good, and particularly, as poor fallen sinners, guilty and exposed to the wrath of GOD, let us "glory in the cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, which, however mean and ignominious it may appear to a superficial glance, yet upon the steady and piercing intuition of faith will be found to contain in it the most amazing glories, the most substantial blessings, and the most powerful inducements to holiness; and holiness is nothing other than the rectitude, the health, and happiness of our souls.

In the former discourse I proposed,

I. To consider what we may understand by glorying. And,

II. I

II. I was to shew you in what the Apostle gloried. "GOD forbid," says he, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST."

The first head, namely, to shew what we may understand by glorying, I have considered. I have also proceeded,

II. To shew you in what the Apostle gloried. "GOD forbid," says he, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST." And I told you that the Apostle *Paul*, and after him all true christians, might glory in the cross of CHRIST.

1. As it gives the most august and wonderful display of the divine perfections. This head I particularly and largely discussed. I come,

2. To shew you that another reason why the Apostle, and after him all true christians, should glory in the cross of CHRIST, is, that it is the foundation of all our blessed hopes towards GOD. We are sinners before GOD. "Iniquities have prevailed against us," and have rendered us not only odious to the divine holiness, but obnoxious to the divine justice. If GOD was to "enter into judgment with us, not even the best among us could be justified before him (r). If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquity, O LORD, who could stand (s)?" And *Job* himself

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himself

(r) Psal. cxliiii. 2. (s) Psal. cxxx. 3.

himself says, (and if he said thus, what must we say? surely nothing better than what he did) "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say, I am perfect, this also shall prove me perverse. If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, yet wilt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me: for he is not a man as I am, that I should answer him, that we should come together in judgment (u)." "Every mouth," whether *Jew* or *Gentile*, "must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (x)." Against us therefore, as the desert of our sins, are the curse and thunder of the law directed. A broken law, a law especially so dreadfully broken as we have broken it, must of consequence denounce nothing but wrath. All life and hope from it are for ever over. It speaks not one comfortable word to us, but like *Sinai* of old, it "burns with fire," and is "covered with blackness, and darkness, and tempest:" so that even an *Abraham* or a *Moses* may with the greatest reason "exceedingly fear and quake." "Unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that does evil, of the *Jew* first, and also of the *Gentile* (y)." "For," says the

(u) Job ix. 20, 30. (x) Rom. iii. 19, 23. (y) Rom. ii. 8.

the Apostle, "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came" in its purity and demands for absolute and persevering holiness in heart, lip, and life, "sin revived, and I died. And the commandment which was ordained to life," which would have given life, if it had been inviolably and perpetually obeyed, "I found," through my disobedience and violation of it, "to be unto death (z)," to denounce death against me, and seal me up under its curse without any hope or hint of mercy or remedy from it. To the same purpose we read, that "as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; for it is written, cursed is every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them (a)." Such is our condition as sinners before GOD; and in this dreadful situation, to what quarter shall we look for help, or whither shall we turn? If we think of *repenting* and *reforming*, alas! what will future *repentance* and future *reformation* do to expiate past offences, and set us clear and innocent in the sight of our injured and holy Sovereign? Will the exactest caution not to contract fresh scores cancel the debts of more than ten thousand talents that we already owe to our God, and for the discharge of which we have not a single mite to offer in payment? Or will the good behaviour of a man for time to come release him from

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(z) Romans vii. 9, 10,

(a) Gal. iii. 12.

the indictments of rebellion, robbery, and murder, that have not only been preferred against him, but which have been incontestibly proved upon him? And after all, after our best *repentance* and *reformation*, will not our *repentance* need to be *repented of*, and our *reformation* need to be *reformed*, and can it be conceived that present sin can atone for sin that is past, or present imperfection make up for former deficiencies? Nay further, let it be considered, that we shall in our corrupted as well as guilty state, need grace and power to enable us to *repent* and *reform*; for surely that is alone worthy to be called *repentance*, which does not merely consist in dismal apprehensions of sin, because of its curse, or in sorrows merely extorted from terror, but that takes into it an hatred and opposition of the soul against sin, because of its own intrinsic malignity, or because it is contrary to the nature and will of our holy God, and is a most outrageous affront, and base requital to him for his undeserved goodness and favour towards us. And in like manner, that only deserves to be called *reformation*, which does not only lop off the insolent growth and superfluity of naughtiness in the life, but that "lays the ax to the root of " the tree," and plucks up the power and interests of sin in our very hearts, in our inmost desires, choice, and inclinations. And can we thus *repent* and *reform* of ourselves? Do we not need greater help than our impotency and depravity can afford us thus to " put off the old
 " man

“ man with his deeds, and to put on the new
“ man, which is created after the image of God
“ in righteousness and true holiness?” or can
we say either that G O D does not, as “ he is
“ of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” and
as he “ cannot look upon sin, desire truth in
“ the inward parts,” or that it must not be
from himself, but from us, that we are to be
“ taught in the hidden parts to know wis-
“ dom (b)?” Thus weak and insufficient are all
notions of future repentance and reformation
to give us a sure and solid refuge against the
curse of the law, and the consequent demands
of justice upon us.

But it may be said, ‘ We will fly to the mer-
cy of God. He is a God of mercy. Mercy is
his nature and delight. It is his darling attri-
bute. God is love. He desires not the destruc-
tion of his creatures. He is ready to forgive.
He is abundant in pardon. Here therefore we
will trust ourselves, and take sanctuary in the
divine mercy from the terrors of his avenging
justice.’ But though I trust it will be always
far from me to raise any unsuitable ideas of de-
ity in the minds of men, and though I grant
there is mercy with God, nay, though I add fur-
ther, that without this mercy not one of the
sons or daughters of *Adam* could be saved, yet I
would have it carefully considered and attended
to by us, that God is just, and holy, and true,
as well as merciful, and can we suppose that

U 3

mercy

mercy will be exerted and displayed to the eclipse of the other divine perfections, or that the demands of justice, the lustres of holiness, or the glories of divine truth, shall be set aside and disregarded, that mercy may triumph, as it were, upon their ruins, in our pardon and salvation? You know that we are under a law to God; you know that this law has its penalties to punish disobedience, as well as its blessings to reward a perfect and invariable conformity to it; and what are we to entertain such ideas of the mercy of God, as that when we have broken his laws, though never so often and never so heinously, we are in no danger from the threatened executions of punishment, or that we have nothing to fear or apprehend in a way of resentment from our injured Sovereign, no less than the supreme LORD of heaven and earth, but that, on the other hand, mercy will certainly and at once forgive all that we have done against God, "receive us graciously, and love us freely," and cease all concern about our sins, as if they had never been committed? Strange, incongruous, and derogatory ideas these concerning the high, the holy, the righteous, the faithful, and the wise God! If this is the case, why are we under his law? Or why has his law (as it must have, or else it were not a law, but a rule) a dark as well as a bright side, "a secret place of thunder," as well as a storehouse of blessings? What would you think of the equity or wisdom of a prince who should enact laws, and order his

his subjects to obey them under pain of grievous punishment, and yet should never execute punishment upon the most flagitious and frequent acts of disobedience and transgression? Or do you not see the propriety, the beauty of administration, though the King himself is of the most humane and gracious disposition, in his making examples of offenders according to the denunciations of his laws? And is it not the very nature and end of government to reward the good, and punish the bad? And what must there be no judgment, no penalty inflicted upon creatures, dependents, pensioners, subjects, when they rise up in rebellion against the infinitely great and blessed God, their Maker, Father, Sovereign, Benefactor, "in whom they live, and move, and have their being; in whose hand their breath is, and whose are all their ways," and whose unmerited love is the spring of all their enjoyments? And what must the mercy of God immediately, and without any regards had to law and justice, shine forth in pardon and salvation, and shall his disobedient, disloyal, and undutiful creatures have as much of his favour as the obedient, loyal, and dutiful, who have never in ought or at any time transgressed against him? Such a view of God as this must greatly wrong and injure him, and is absolutely contrary to all just sentiments of him from reason, and how much more, may I add, to the revelation of him in his own oracles, the scriptures? In the scriptures we learn not only that

we are under a law to God, and that this law in case of violation denounces the most tremendous punishments against offenders, but we are also assured from the sacred pages, that notwithstanding all the infinite love which the "God
 " over all blessed for evermore" possesses, that he has actually executed punishment, and that very great and terrible punishment, upon delinquents; particularly in the expulsion of the fallen angels out of heaven for their sins, and the
 " reservation of them in everlasting chains under darkness to the judgment of the great
 " day"—the banishment of our first parents out of Paradise for their disobedience, with many an heavy weight of misery first to rest upon themselves, and afterwards to descend upon their posterity—the destruction of the old world by a deluge of waters for their abominable impieties, and outrage of iniquity—the overthrow of *Sodom* and *Gomorrab* by fire and brimstone from heaven for their unnatural and enormous wickedness—the excision of the heathen nations for their universal and intolerable provocations to make room for the *Israelites*—the punishment of the *Israelites* for their idolatry, and other abominations, till at last, as having filled up the measure of their iniquities in the crucifixion of the MESSIAH, the persecution of his ambassadors, and the rejection of the gospel, they were delivered up into the hands of the *Romans*, their city taken, themselves in incredible numbers most dreadfully slaughtered, and their
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remains given up to a bitter oppression and captivity, the dispersion of whose descendents among the nations continues to the present day. These are instances, with others, many others that might be mentioned that scripture furnishes of the actual inflictions of punishment upon transgressors, notwithstanding it is immutably and eternally true that GOD is a GOD of goodness and mercy. And is this the case then what sure remedy have we in the mercy of GOD, after we have offended him by our iniquity? Or where is the substantial ground of hope, notwithstanding we are certain that GOD is merciful and gracious, that we shall obtain forgiveness for our sins? And much less, where is the ground for hope that we shall find acceptance with him, so as to attain the positive and unspeakably great and glorious blessings and privileges of his children, favourites, and heirs, whom he will delight to bless not only with his favour here, but with his blissful enjoyment for ever? Be it so that there are permanent and indefectible lustre and joy in GOD my Sun, yet if I have by my sins sent up such vapours as have condensed into clouds, and spread a separating veil between me and the light of his countenance, where is my advantage, or where is my consolation, if I know of no way in which these clouds may be dispersed, and notwithstanding what GOD is in himself, may I not be driven at last into "the blackness of darkness for ever" and ever? Whither then shall we look for
" help

"help in our extremity," or what is the way, after all our sins and provocations, in which we may hope to meet with pardon and acceptance with G O D, and become his children and heirs, since Repentance and reformation are insufficient refuges, and invincible obstructions shut up the path of mercy. Here our answer is, that we are to look to the cross of CHRIST, and that alone, for there, and there alone is salvation. The cross of CHRIST is the foundation of our hopes; JESUS CHRIST has died to make atonement for our sins, and to "bring in everlasting righteousness." He has suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to G O D (c). "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sanctify to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of CHRIST, who through the eternal SPIRIT offered himself without spot to G O D, purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living G O D (d)? The blood of JESUS CHRIST cleanses us from all sin (e)." What is our shield against the arrows of divine justice? What our refuge from the thunders of the broken law, but the cross of CHRIST? CHRIST was condemned, that we might be acquitted; he was scourged, that we might escape the strokes of divine wrath; he was crowned with thorns, that we might wear a crown of glory; he was clothed with mock-majesty, that we might become "kings and priests to G O D, even
 " the

(c) 1 Peter iii. 18.

(d) Heb. ix. 13.

(e) 1 John i. 7.

“ the FATHER ;” he was blasphemed, that we might be honoured ; he was cast out as an abominable branch, that we might become “ branches of renown ;” he was bound, that we might go free ; he endured the cross, that we might not endure the curse of the law ; he was forsaken of God, that we might be accepted with him ; he was emptied, that we might be made rich ; he was defamed, that we might be glorified ; and he was delivered to death, and endured the death, that we might inherit eternal life. In a word, he was our Surety, and our sacrifice, and our redemption rises from his arrest, and our triumph from his cross. “ He “ finished transgression, made an end of sin, “ made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought “ in everlasting righteousness (f).” When all other help failed, the REDEEMER interposed, and “ help was laid upon him who was mighty,” mighty “ to save, even unto the uttermost, all “ such as come to God by him.” He was appointed to save, and he was able to save. His sacrifice was defective in nothing: it had all the reality of manhood, and this without any spot or stain, and thus was our EMMANUEL qualified to suffer; and it had annexed to it all the inexpressible dignity of an intimate relation to Godhead, and thus was our LORD able to diffuse a worth and value into his oblation, that might render it most satisfactory, and worthy of God himself to accept in the place of sinners. May
not

(f) Dan. ix. 24.

not we truly say, in this view of the matter, that the whole creation consuming in an universal flame could not have been a sacrifice to divine justice so great and glorious as that of our incarnate GOD? And now shall we wonder, my friends, that the Apostle *Paul* should glory in the cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST? Here was the foundation, the only foundation of his hope. Here was his anchor, that anchor which could alone preserve him from perishing in the floods and storms of the divine indignation. He saw the imperfection of his legal righteousness; he saw the impossibility of being justified either by what he had done, or what he could do, and therefore does he glory, and glory only in the cross of his LORD JESUS CHRIST. At the cross of CHRIST he could give an answer to every indictment of law, justice, and conscience. At the cross of CHRIST he could bid defiance to all his enemies, and thence could he look down with peace and composure even upon death and hell, knowing that by this cross, death was disarmed of his sting, and that hell itself should not have dominion over him; as he says, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies, who is he that condemneth? It is CHRIST that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right-hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us (g)." I proceed,

3dly

3dly and lastly, To mention another reason why the Apostle, and after him all true christians, should glory in the cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST; and that is, that the cross of CHRIST is the grand incentive to, and instrument of our holiness. The cross of CHRIST is so far from being a temptation for indulgence to sin, that on the other hand it is the greatest friend and support to holiness. It is the sanctuary of the sinner, but it is the enemy, the very cross of sin. So far is it from breaking, that on the other hand it sustains the tables of the law. This may appear indeed strange at the first view; but examine the matter closely, and you will find that it is an indubitable truth, that the cross of CHRIST is the incentive to, and the instrument of our holiness. At the cross of CHRIST we see the abomination, the "exceeding sinfulness of sin," as the Apostle expresses it (*b*). What a complication, what an hell itself of all that is horrible and bad must there be in sin, that nothing less than the blood of JESUS CHRIST, the only-begotten of the FATHER, is sufficient to make atonement for it? No lamb, no bullock, no man, no angel, no arch-angel, no spicy mountains, no nor worlds on flames can expiate for sin, and reconcile GOD to us. It is only the blood of JESUS CHRIST his SON that an infinitely wise GOD judges sufficient to "cleanse us from our sin." The cross of CHRIST shews pity to his own murderers, and his blood cries out,

(*b*) Rom. vii. 13.

out, "FATHER forgive them, for they know not what they do (i):" but it shews no pity to our murderers, our sins. Here we behold not only the mildness of infinite compassion, but the majesty of eternal justice. What evil then must there be in sin, from what appears at the cross of CHRIST? Its malignity is writ in the blood of the SON of GOD. And if there is this evil in sin, how does the view tend to excite our abhorrence of it, and our indignation against it? Again, at the cross of CHRIST we see that there is an actual relief for our souls against the guilt of sin, and hence arise most powerful inducements to holiness. At the cross of CHRIST we see that there is a way opened for our pardon and restoration to the favour of our GOD, and that "where sin has abounded, grace does much more abound;" and thus we are relieved from every desponding, despairing apprehension, with which the sense of our sin, and the uncertainty of our hopes as to its forgiveness might have filled our minds. And "is it a light thing," to be set free from despair, or from every thing that had a gloomy tendency to sink us into such an abject, disconsolate, and horrible situation of mind? Or shall we not be at much more leisure, may I so speak, and be much more inspired to study and pursue after holiness, when we are released from every slavish bond and horror of despair, than when we are shut up in its darkness, or feel ourselves in an hopeless state, "whether

(i) Luke xxiii. 46.

"whether we turn to the right-hand or to the left," whether we think of serving GOD, or disobeying him. Despair kills at once the hope and the exertion of the soul. It is a sorrow that in its own nature works death ; but being delivered from it, as we are by the cross of CHRIST, how is the soul set at liberty to "run the ways of GOD's commandments? Sin," says the Apostle, "shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace (*k*)."
It "shall not have dominion over you," it shall not exercise its former tyrannic and uncontrollable sway over you, because "ye are not under the law," the broken covenant of works, that denounced nothing but wrath and vengeance, "but are under grace," the dispensation, the covenant of grace, established in the hands of JESUS, and ratified by his blood. Guilt may extort the desponding sigh, or wring out the iron tear, but repentance (and repentance is the beginning of holiness) is never so free, or flows so genuine from the heart, as when it is mingled with a sense of forgiving mercy though the merits of the REDEEMER. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared (*l*)."
Let me add further, that the cross of CHRIST opens the springs of the most generous love and gratitude in our souls. Here is a crucified SAVIOUR, JESUS the SON of GOD, conflicting with the curses due to our sins, and expiring amidst the foulest shame, and the most excruciating

(k) Rom. vi. 14.*(l)* Psalm cxxx. 4.

ating miseries, and all this to make way for our everlasting salvation, in a way honourable to GOD, and worthy of him. "By his stripes we are healed," by his blood we are pardoned, and his death is the price of our salvation and immortal happiness. And can we consider all this, can we enlarge our souls to comprehend this wonderful display of divine love to us, and not see and feel ourselves laid under the most powerful obligations to love our LORD JESUS CHRIST, to love that blessed GOD and FATHER that sent him, and to give up ourselves to GOD and CHRIST, as those who "are not our own," "but are bought with a price," and therefore under the most efficacious, as they are the most delightful bonds, to "glorify him with our bodies and with our spirits?" What, have the bleeding agonies, the exquisite pains, and sorrows of our LORD JESUS CHRIST no arguments in them, wherefore we should "live unto him who has died for us?" Or is not every wound our LORD has endured, as it were, a mouth calling upon us with an irresistible eloquence to love "him who has thus loved us," and to shew our love, as he justly expects from us, by "keeping his commandments, and walking before him in newness of life? The love of CHRIST" seen and tasted in the fruits of his cross should "constrain us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him

“ him who died for them, and rose again (m).”
 O “ what manner of persons ought we to be in
 “ all holy conversation and godliness,” if we
 would in any good measure, with any kind of
 proportion, or rather with any attempts towards
 it, answer that stupendous manner of love that
 has been bestowed upon us ! JESUS CHRIST was
 crucified : crucified, I hope, for me, unworthy,
 miserable, guilty creature as I was : my sins
 were the thorns in his head, the spear in his
 side, the nails in his hands and his feet ; my sins
 made him sore amazed, and “ exceeding for-
 rowful,” my sins were the cloud that hid his
 FATHER’S face from him, and by these volun-
 tary sufferings for me did he obtain my eternal
 redemption, “ deliver me from the wrath to
 “ come,” and open the way for my admission
 into heaven and eternal glory ; and now shall I
 return him evil for good ? Shall I dishonour
 that SAVIOUR, who has so much honoured me,
 or shall I “ break his bands asunder, and cast
 “ away his cords from me,” who has “ drawn
 “ me with the cords of his love, and loved me
 “ with an everlasting” unparalleled “ love” and
 mercy. ‘ Here, O LORD, in the flames of love,
 ‘ kindled from the ineffable love of thy cross,
 ‘ would I present myself “ a living sacrifice, ho-
 “ ly and acceptable” to thyself, “ which is my
 “ reasonable service.” I am one of “ thy willing
 “ people in the day of thy power,” and thy
 “ mercy has melted and overpowered me. “ God

X

“ is

" is the LORD, who hath shewn me light, I will
 " therefore bind the sacrifice with cords, even
 " unto the horns of the altar." 'Delivered out
 " of the hands of mine enemies I would now
 " serve thee without fear in holiness and righte-
 " ousness before thee all the days of my life." O
 " that the grace of GOD" revealed to me at the
 cross of CHRIST may teach me to " deny all un-
 " godliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly,
 " righteously, and godly in this present world,
 " looking for that blessed hope and the glorious
 " appearance of the great God, and my SAVI-
 " OUR JESUS CHRIST, who gave himself for me,
 " that he might redeem me from all iniquity,
 " and purify unto himself a peculiar people,
 " zealous of good works."

Thus, my friends, may the cross of CHRIST
 prove an incentive to our holiness, and the in-
 strument of it. The love there displayed has
 a blessed tendency to turn the soul that beholds
 it, that meditates upon it, that realizes it, into
 love, and this love has the most kindly and ef-
 fectual influence upon our obedience, and we
 even begin to enjoy our heaven beforehand,
 when our obedience is enkindled by love, for
 eternal love is the fire that feeds the eternal de-
 votion and service in the regions of glory, and
 what will not saints made perfect perform for
 him to whom they are ascribing their praises,
 under the deepest sense of their infinite obliga-
 tions to their REDEEMER, " unto him that lov-
 " ed us, and washed us from our sins in his own
 " blood

“ blood, and hath made us kings and priests
 “ unto GOD and his FATHER, be glory and do-
 “ minion for ever and ever. *Amen (n).*”

I shall conclude my discourse with directing
 you,

I. Not to forget or overlook the love of the
 FATHER amidst your grateful sense and ac-
 knowledgment of the love of the SON. Let us
 read at the cross of CHRIST the miscellaneous
 wonders of the love of the FATHER, and the
 love of the SON, and let us not amidst the views
 of the love of the SON neglect the sweet aspects,
 the full effulgence of the same benign attribute
 in the person of the FATHER. Who was it that
 provided for the SON a body, and sent him upon
 the errand of reconciliation? Let the scripture
 answer. “ A body hast thou prepared me (o).”
 And, “ GOD so loved the world, as to give his
 “ only-begotten SON, that whosoever believes on
 “ him should not perish, but have everlasting
 “ life (p).” And again, “ Herein is love, not
 “ that we loved GOD, but that GOD loved us,
 “ and sent his SON to be the propitiation for
 “ us (q).” Who was it that succoured and sus-
 tained the human nature of our LORD in his
 season of deep humiliation, and heavy and
 amazing sorrows? The scripture replies, “ Be-
 “ hold, my Servant whom I uphold (r).” It is
 ‘ hereby signified,’ says the excellent *Vitrunga*
 upon the passage, ‘ that the FATHER would ap-
 ply

X 2

(n) Rev. i. 5. (o) Heb. x. 5. (p) John iii. 16.

(q) 1 John iv. 10. (r) Isa. xlii. 1.

'ply himself to his SON as with a peculiar
 'study, and that he would sustain him with
 'his power and providence, amidst the various
 'difficulties he should meet with in the execu-
 'tion of that most arduous work which was
 'committed to him †.' It is said again, "He
 "shall drink of the brook in the way: there-
 "fore shall he lift up the head." 'If it be ask-
 'ed,' says the ingenious and devout Mr *Hervey*,
 'How shall the REDEEMER be able to execute
 'the various and important offices foretold in
 'the preceeding part of the psalm? The Pro-
 'phet replies, "He shall drink of the brook in
 "the way." 'He shall not be left barely to his
 'human nature, which must unavoidably sink
 'under the tremendous work of recovering a
 'lost world; but through the whole course of
 'his incarnate state, through the whole admi-
 'nistration of his mediatorial kingdom, he
 'shall be supported with omnipotent succours.
 'He shall drink at the brook of almighty pow-
 'er, and travel on in the greatness of an uncre-
 'ated strength. "Therefore shall he lift up the
 "head." By these means shall he be equal to
 'the prodigious task, and superior to all oppo-
 'sition. By these means shall he be *thoroughly*
 'successful in whatever he undertakes, and great-

† Ecce servus meus, ad quem me applico. Sic existimo veram
 me reddere emphasin phrasi Hebrææ.— Hic significatur Patrem ad Fi-
 lium servum suum peculiari studio applicare, eumque suâ potentia & pro-
 videntiâ in executione gravissimi officii ipsi mandati inter varios difficul-
 tates sustinere.— VITRINGA in locum.

ly triumphant over all his enemies *.' Further, let it be considered, who it was that appointed and accepted the agonies and death of CHRIST in our stead, and placed the blessings of them to our account, whereas, had the exact and rigid demands of the law been insisted upon, "the soul that sins" must have "died (*r*)," and no surety, no vicarious sacrifice had been admitted. It was the FATHER that mercifully appointed, and mercifully accepted the oblation of CHRIST in our room. He "gave him to be our ransom." He "laid on him our iniquities." He smelt a sweet savour in his sacrifice, and for its sake "reconciled the world unto himself." CHRIST was "of GOD made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (*s*). We "are justified freely by" his FATHER'S "grace, through the redemption that is in CHRIST JESUS (*t*). And we have redemption through the blood of CHRIST, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace (*u*)." Let us then duly observe, and thankfully record the love of the FATHER, as demonstrated in concert and conjunction with the love of the SON. The love of both in the warmest and strongest beams shines forth from the cross of CHRIST. Let us then in union of heart and voice join with the host of heaven, and ascribe "blessing, and honour, and glory, and power to him

X 3

" that

* *Hervey's Meditations*, Vol. I. page 132, 133.

(*r*) Ezek. xviii. 4. (*s*) 1 Cor. i. 30. (*t*) Rom. iii. 24.

(*u*) Eph. i. 7.

“ that sits upon the throne, and unto the LAMB
“ for ever and ever (x).”

Let me add,

2. Since the cross of CHRIST is such an incentive to holiness, and such an instrument of it, let us examine whether we have found it such in our experience. What effect has the meditation of the cross of CHRIST had upon our hearts? Do we find its constraints to holiness, and feel within ourselves that the love of CHRIST displayed there, and so legible in the grief, and shame, and death of our divine REDEEMER, has touched, has penetrated, has possessed, has overpowered our souls, and transformed them into love, as the small taper kindles at a strong and intense flame? Do not let us flatter ourselves that we are interested in the salvation of the cross, if we have never found our hearts drawn forth to love CHRIST, and to shew our love by keeping his commandments. Pardon and renovation are inseparable companions. Dead sinners are not invested with the robes of CHRIST's righteousness, any more than souls born from above are left unsheltered or unadorned with that divine array. Let us then examine ourselves, whether by the cross of CHRIST we have learned to hate, to renounce, to crucify sin, and never let us without an experience of the holy fruits of the cross ever imagine that we have any part or lot in its salvation from the wrath to come.
“ They that are CHRIST's have crucified the
“ flesh

“flesh with its affections and lusts (y).” And
“there is no condemnation to them who are in
CHRIST JESUS, who walk not after the flesh,
“but after the SPIRIT (z).”

(y) Gal. v. 24.

(z) Rom. viii. 1.



*An H Y M N, suited to the
foregoing Sermon.*

I.

THE cross of CHRIST—what wonders there
In their divinest forms appear !
The GOD the great, the just, the true,
The wise, the good, o'erwhelms the view.

II.

Nature's stupendous frame displays
His might, and publishes his praise ;
But here in harmony divine
His attributes supremely shine.

III.

While JESUS bleeds, and groans, and dies,
For human guilt the sacrifice,
He heav'n's avenging curse sustains,
And pardon gushes from his veins.

IV.

See him our pain and shame assume,
 And show'r on sinners in their room
 Forgiveness, and eternal bliss—
 Where is the love that vies with this!

V.

What shall I render to my God?
 My tongue shall spread his praise abroad!
 Th' unbounded grace the cross reveals
 My soul in grateful transport feels.

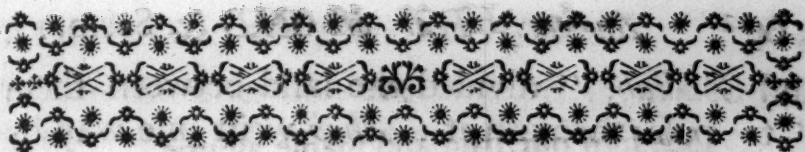
VI.

Love kindles love. And did my LORD
 Such unexampled grace afford,
 To bear the curse, the cross for me?
 JESUS, I'll live alone to thee.



28 SE60

SERMON



S E R M O N XIII.

An early Fear of G O D represented
and enforced.



I K I N G S XVIII. 12.

— *But I thy servant fear the LORD from
my youth.*

Long and grievous famine, unquestionably as the awful rebuke upon King *Ahab's* and the nation's idolatry and abominations in the sight of the LORD, had lain upon the land of *Israel*. In the extremity of the drought, the immediate cause of the famine, *Ahab* calls *Obadiah*, the steward of his house, and bids him, "Go into the land (verse 5.) unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks, if peradventure they might find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that they might not lose all the beasts." And it is said, verse 6. "So they," that is, *Ahab* and

and *Obadiab*, “divided the land between them
“to pass through it: *Abab* went one way by
“himself, and *Obadiab* went another way by
“himself.” As *Obadiab* in obedience to the com-
mands of his royal master was making his tour
through the land, he is met with by the Pro-
phet *Elijah*, verse 7. “And as *Obadiab* was in
“the way, behold *Elijah* met him, and he knew
“him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou
“that my lord *Elijah*? And he answered him,
“I am: go tell thy master, I am here. And he,”
that is *Obadiab*, “said, (verse 9.) What have I
“sinned that thou wouldest deliver thy servant
“into the hand of *Abab*, to slay me? As the
“LORD thy GOD lives, (verse 10.) there is no
“nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath
“not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He
“is not there, he took an oath of the kingdom
“and nation, that they found thee not. And
“now thou sayest, (verse 11.) Go tell thy lord,
“Behold, *Elijah* is here. And it shall come to
“pass, (verse 12.) as soon as I am gone from
“thee, that the SPIRIT of the LORD shall carry
“thee whither I know not: and so when I
“come and tell *Abab*, and he cannot find thee,
“he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the
“LORD from my youth.” The sum of the mat-
ter appears to be this: *Obadiab* was apprehen-
sive, knowing the bitter, implacable resentment
of his prince against *Elijah*, that if he went to
acquaint *Abab*, according to the Prophet’s desire,
of his meeting with *Elijah*, and the place where
he

he had the interview with him, that *Abab* would immediately come with a resolution to murder the Prophet, while the GOD whom *Elijah* served, as the guardian of his life, would defeat *Abab's* bloody intention by carrying away *Elijah* in the SPIRIT to some other place entirely out of the knowledge both of *Abab* and *Obadiab*: as the consequence of which, the exasperated monarch, in revenge for a seeming mockery, and that by his own servant, would instantly slay *Obadiab*, though there would be no just blame to be found in him, either in the sight of GOD or man. "But I thy servant," adds *Obadiab*, in the words of our text, "fear the LORD from my youth." 'But let me not,' as if the good man had said, 'thus fall a victim to the fury of my master, and under the reproach of having acted an unbecoming part towards him: for whatever may be the idolatry of my king, his queen, his court, and the kingdom, I thy servant, who sincerely love and regard thee, and shall take a pleasure to manifest my respect towards thee by every method in my power, "I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth." I fear the JEHOVAH, the GOD of *Israel*, and he has my undissembled and undivided homage and worship, and such have been my temper and conduct from my youth.' Such appears to be the sense of *Obadiab's* speech to the Prophet, though *Elijah* had no design like what *Obadiab* suggested, but was so far from intending to elude, that he was determined to obtain
an

an interview with *Ahab*, as we find from the 15th verse of the chapter.

What I purpose to insist upon from the words, "But I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth," shall be comprehended in the two following heads.

I. I shall consider what we may understand by fearing the LORD. And,

II. I shall exhort young persons to follow the example of *Obadiah*, and fear the LORD from their youth.

I. I shall consider what we may understand by fearing the LORD. "But I thy servant fear the LORD."

As to fear, in the general sense of it, it is that passion of the mind which we feel upon the apprehension that we shall miss of the good we hoped for, or that we shall not be able to avoid that evil or that danger that lies before us, and seems to threaten us. As to fear, when it is applied to God, or has God for its object, as we find it frequently in scripture mentioned in this view, we may consider it either in a restrictive, or enlarged sense.

1st, Fear, when it has God for its object, may be considered in a restrictive sense. And thus it may denote,

I. Such an apprehension of God, as an affronted and provoked lawgiver and avenger of sin, as produces in the soul great terror, and horrible

rible amazement. The law of GOD has been broken, the curses of that law therefore have been drawn forth, and set in array against every transgressor, and they are ready to be discharged in all their fiery vengeance upon the sinner. All this the sinner sees, and knows that "with GOD is terrible majesty," and that his wrath and punishments are so great, that they can never be endured but with the most miserable anguish, and that they are so certain and inevitable, that they can be by no means whatever escaped. Hence arises a fear of GOD, a fear that startles, amazes, confounds, overwhelms, and in a manner, it may be, distracts the very soul of the sinner, and makes him even a terror to himself. Need I produce passages from scripture that speak of this kind of fear, or examples of it, when they are so many, and so obvious? "My punishment is greater than I can bear," says *Cain*, reeking with his brother's blood (*a*). "For thine arrows," says the Psalmist, "stick fast within me, and thine hand presses me sore (*b*). The sinners in *Zion*," says the Prophet *Isaiah*, "are afraid, fearfulness hath surprized the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings (*c*)? What have we to do with thee, JESUS, thou SON of GOD," was the hideous cry of the devils to our LORD, "art thou come hither to torment

" us

(*a*) Gen. iv. 13. (*b*) Psalm xxxviii. 2. (*c*) Isa. xxxiii. 14.

“us before the time (g)?” Thus we read that *Felix* trembled as the Apostle *Paul* reasoned to the unrighteous wretch “of righteousness,” to the incestuous wretch “of temperance,” or chastity, and to the unprepared wretch of “the judgment to come (e).” We also read of a “certain looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation to devour the adversaries (f).” And we are told by the Apostle *John*, that “there is no fear,” no servile, distressing fear “in love, but that perfect love casts out fear, because fear hath torment: he that fears is not made perfect in love (g).” Such then is one sense of fear when restrictively taken. Now let it be observed, that though this fear is not desirable in itself, yet it is that fear which oftentimes is the first step to saving conversion. Thus it was in the case of the murderers of our LORD, who cried out in the terror of their spirits, under a conviction that the guilt of CHRIST’S blood lay upon their souls, “Men and brethren, what shall we do (h)?” And the Apostle *Paul* tells us concerning himself, that “he was alive without the law once, but that when the commandment came,” came in its spirituality, demands, and punishment, “sin revived, and he died (i).” And speaking to the converts at *Rome* he says, “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear (k).” And how

(d) Mat. viii. 29.

(e) Acts xxiv. 25.

(f) Heb. x. 27.

(g) 1 John iv. 18.

(h) Acts ii. 37.

(i) Rom. vii. 9.

(k) Rom. viii. 15.

how much more pleasant are the pains and groans of sinners under the sense of guilt, and "the terrors of the Almighty," than to find them calm and still, lying down and loving to slumber, and as thoughtless of their danger as if they were in "covenant with death, and at an agreement with hell," and had no curse of the law rolling its vengeance against them? Better to find sinners bad, and feeling their disease, than to behold them in the very jaws of death, and totally careless and unconcerned about their condition. Better that the remembrance of sin should bite like the scorpion, and sting like the adder, than that sinners should remain dark and blind, hardened, and stupid upon the very brink of even damnation itself, as ministers are provided with a remedy, an efficacious and sovereign remedy against all these distresses and terrors in the declarations and invitations of the gospel, where we are assured, that "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men (l):" That "it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that CHRIST JESUS came into the world, to save even the chief of sinners (m)." That "the blood of CHRIST cleanses from all sin (n)." And what heavenly virtue distils in those gracious words of our LORD, surely enough to quench every burning wound of conscience, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,"

(l) Mat. xii. 31.

(m) 1 Tim. i. 15.

(n) 1 John i. 7.

“den, and I will give you rest (o)? And, the SPI-
 “RIT of the LORD is upon me, because he hath
 “anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor,
 “he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted,
 “to preach deliverance to the captives, and re-
 “covering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty
 “them that are bruised, and to preach the ac-
 “ceptable year of the LORD (p).”

2. Fear when it has God for its object, and is taken restrictively, may denote an holy reverence of him. Fear may be produced by the view of some object full of glory, majesty, and dominion, though possibly there may be no reason to expect any hurt, or any thing injurious to our safety and peace from the object of our fear. Thus a subject feels a reverential fear at the presence of his King, from the sense of his greatness and dominion, and thus much more may the contemplation of the supreme dignity and sovereign power of the Almighty God inspire the mind with a sacred veneration, though there may not be, our evidences of an interest in him being clear and full, the least degree of terror, or dreadful apprehension mingled with the holy reverence we bear to his infinitely great and glorious majesty. “Fear ye not me, saith the
 “LORD—who have placed the sand for the
 “bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that
 “it cannot pass, and though the waves thereof
 “toss themselves, yet can they not prevail;
 “though they roar, yet cannot they pass over
 “it

(o) Mat. xi. 28.

(p) Luke iv. 18.

it (q).” And again in the same Prophet, “Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O LORD; thou art great, and thy Name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? For to thee doth it appertain; forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms there is none like unto thee (r).” It is said of the *Israelites*, upon their being eye-witnesses to the overthrow of *Pharaoh* and his host in the *Red-sea*, that “they feared the LORD (s),” and one of the honours that they ascribe to him in their triumphal ode upon the occasion is, that he was “fearful in praises (t).” There was something that excited an holy reverence of God, even in that very exertion of divine mercy which wrought their deliverance, for power and goodness blended their consummate glories together. It is told us, that “the children of *Israel* should return, and seek the LORD their God, and *David* their King, and should fear the LORD, and his goodness in the latter days (u).” If we refer this promise to the times of the gospel, as the passage seems to lead our view to that blessed period, how much reason would there be for them to fear, or reverence their God in the method of salvation by *David* their King, or in other words by *JESUS the MESSIAH*, since in that method we behold the goodness of God displaying its glories in a most august and venerable conjunction

Y

with

(q) Jer. v. 22. (r) Jer. x. 6, 7. (s) Exod. xiv. 31.

(t) Exod. xv. 11. (u) Hosea iii. 5.

with the divine truth, justice, and holiness? This fear, this sacred reverence of the Almighty, how proper and becoming at all times? We think upon GOD, we read him in the inscriptions of glory and majesty in the works of his hands, and we hear him in the wonderful mixture of greatness and goodness, of supremacy and condescension, in the revelation of his word. We consider what is his nature, that he is eternal, infinite, and immutable, that he is possessed of unerring wisdom, unbounded power, absolute holiness, inflexible justice, inviolable truth, and immeasurable and everlasting goodness. We see him in the stupendous displays of himself in the magnificence and harmony of the universe, which is nothing else than the temple of his glory, and we contemplate him as revealing himself as from the holy of holies as a GOD of justice and holiness, and yet of grace and compassion in his new covenant with his SON JESUS CHRIST, and all believers with him; and we hear him in the most merciful declarations and promises speaking to us of the glories of heaven, and the blessedness that awaits all his faithful servants and subjects; and thus is there, under the influences of his SPIRIT, an holy fear and reverence of GOD excited in our minds, and we entertain high and honourable sentiments of him who is immensely and supremely great and glorious. And the higher creatures rise in capacity and in holiness, the more of this kind of fear we may well suppose will fill their
spi-

spirits. See an instance of this kind in the divine word. "In the year that king *Uzziah* died," says the Prophet, "I saw also the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the Seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory (x)." The profoundest reverence, the most ardent love, and the most extatic joy constitute the worship, and the bliss of heaven; and the archangel that excels in strength and holiness proportionally surpasses others in the strength of these experiences, and the eminency of these holy exercises.

3. And lastly, Fear, when it has God for its object, and taken restrictively, may signify an holy caution lest we offend against him. This fear of caution lest we offend God, how powerfully did it operate on good *Joseph*, who, when he was tempted to impurity, repels the solicitation by saying, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God (y)?" In this sense of fear we may interpret that passage, "Blessed is the man that fears the LORD, that delights greatly in his commandments (z)." And as designing a fear of caution we may understand the wise man when he says, "Happy is the man that fears always (a)." This fear of caution

Y 2

is

(x) *Isai.* vi. 1—4.(y) *Gen.* xxxix. 9.(z) *Pf.* cxii. 1.(a) *Prov.* xxviii. 14.

is a due care and vigilance not to displease that person from whom we enjoy, or whom we hope for what is good, or it is the fear of a benefactor, or of that being or person from whom we have great and large expectations of favour and blessing. This fear of caution is very commendable in us, and it never, no not in one hour or moment of our lives, should be absent as to its power and influence upon the soul. We should ever consider ourselves as under the eye of God, as ever dependent upon him for his blessing, and as unspeakably obliged to him for his mercies; and we should be so careful lest we offend him, that we should rather submit to the greatest losses and trouble that can be imagined than go contrary to his will, break his laws, and evilly requite him who is our creator, preserver, benefactor, portion, and our all in all. This holy caution, this fear of God, purified and enlivened by the fires of eternal love, is the temper of heaven itself, and undoubtedly holy angels and saints made perfect, will be for ever careful that they do not offend him who is their gracious FATHER, and the fountain of their indefectible and everlasting felicity. We proceed,

2dly, To consider fear, when it has God for its object in its enlarged sense. And by fear, as it respects God in an enlarged sense we may understand the whole of religion, by a *Synecdoche* or trope in rhetoric, which puts a part of a thing for the whole. And where the impropriety that the fear of God should stand for the whole

whole of religion, since religion has its origin in the fear of GOD, since the fear of GOD is one of its essential parts, and since this excellent grace operates and diffuses itself through the whole of religion, as the blood spreads itself in a general and vital circulation through all the human frame? In this sense of fear, as respecting GOD, we may consider particularly the following passages. "And unto man he" (that is, GOD) "said, Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding (b)." "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD (c):" that is, 'I will teach you religion, or your duty towards GOD and man;' as the following verses shew, for the Psalmist goes on: "What man is he that desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it, &c." And the wise man sums up his counsels in this direction: "Fear GOD, and keep his commandments." "Fear GOD, worship, serve, and honour him, and let your inward temper of religion discover itself in an open and visible practice of his commandments," "for this is the whole duty of man (d)."

To treat upon the fear of GOD in this comprehensive sense, as including all religion, would require great enlargement, and to attempt to exhaust

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(b) Job xxviii. 28. (c) Psal xxxiv. 11. (d) Eccl. xii. 13.

exhaust the subject would be absolutely impossible, not only in one, but in many Discourses. Suffice it for me only to give you an epitome of it. When the fear of GOD stands for the whole of Religion, we design
 ‘ that holy and heavenly disposition wrought
 ‘ in us by the Spirit of GOD, whereby we are
 ‘ enabled to hate and repent of sin, to trust in
 ‘ the pardoning mercy of GOD through JESUS
 ‘ CHRIST for salvation, to reverence, love,
 ‘ and delight ourselves in the Almighty, to give
 ‘ up ourselves to his service and glory, and to
 ‘ manifest in all the fruits of temperance, kindness, justice, and truth to mankind, that we
 ‘ are indeed the saints and servants of GOD,
 ‘ and a people formed for himself, to glorify
 ‘ him here, and to enjoy him for ever.’

And thus have I represented before you, under the *first* head, what we are to understand by fearing the LORD, and I have considered the fear of the LORD both in a restrictive and in an enlarged sense. If it should be asked, in which of these senses we are to interpret the *fear* mentioned in the text, or what good *Obadiab* intends when he says, “ But I thy servant
 “ fear the LORD from my youth ?” I answer, that it may be taken in a restrictive sense, as denoting, not the fear of terror, and torment, but the fear of reverence, and caution ; or it may be taken in the enlarged sense, as descriptive of all Religion ; and to such a sense what is said of the same *Obadiab* in the third verse of
 our

our chapter very well agrees : “ now *Obadiab* “ feared the LORD greatly ;” that is, he was an excellent and eminent saint : and the reason rendered is a most glorious proof how much he deserved the character given him, as nothing speaks louder for or against a man than his actions ; “ for so it was (see *ver. 4.*) that when “ *Jezabel* cut off the prophets of the LORD, “ that *Obadiab* took an hundred prophets, and “ hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them “ with bread and water.” *Obadiab*’s fearing the LORD from his youth then may intend that he was pious or religious from his youth. This sense of the expression I shall carry with me into my enlargements upon the next head, namely,

II. To exhort young persons to follow the example of *Obadiab*, and fear the LORD from their youth : “ But I, thy servant,” says *Obadiab*, “ fear the LORD from my youth.” — “ I fear the LORD from my youth,” ‘ ever ‘ since I was a young person, or from my childhood, or even from my infancy, for the word ‘ here rendered *youth*, signifies not only youth, ‘ but childhood and infancy * ; “ I have fear-

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* נעורים *Generatim designat totam hominis ætatem quæ est à conceptione hominis, & virilem ætatem antecedit, sive sit Infantia, sive Pueritia, sive Adolescentia. Speciatim denotat, (1) Infantiam, incipientem à natiuitate usque dum loqui incipit soboles, Job xxxi. 18. (2) Pueritiam, quæ cum pueri loquelâ initium capere dicitur, usque ad annum decimum-quintum, Gen. xlv. 34. 1 Sam. xii. 2. (3) Adolescentiam, quæ, ex mente Varronis, incipit ab anno ætatis decimo-quinto,*

“ed the LORD.” ‘O blessed *Obadiab*, to have
 ‘no time on which to look back in the retro-
 ‘spect of many years, it may be fifty or sixty
 ‘years, in which thou couldest not say that
 ‘thou didst fear the LORD, or wert serious
 ‘and religious!’ And now, my young friends,
 let me exhort you to follow this excellent ex-
 ample as far as you can; and if you cannot
 say that you have feared the LORD from
 your infancy or childhood, yet let it be your
 earnest desire and endeavour that you may be
 able to say that you have feared the LORD from
 your youth; and to excite you at once to your
 duty and your happiness, let me lay before you
 the following considerations.

(1.) The season of youth is a most fit and
 proper season in which to fear the LORD, or to
 become holy and religious, because of its spright-
 liness and vigour. Youth is generally distin-
 guished by a full spring-tide of life. Now it is
 that the current of animal pleasure and activity
 usually runs highest and strongest. The arm
 is braced with strength, the eye is sparkling
 with

quinto, usque ad annum tricesimum, Joel i. 8. Stockius in verb.— *Ab
 infantia meâ*. Vulg. Lat.

That is, The word translated *Youth* generally denotes that part
 of life that lies between our conception and our arrival at manhood,
 be it Infancy, Childhood, or Youth. Particularly it denotes, (1) *In-
 fancy*, which reaches from our nativity till we are able to speak,
Job xxxi. 18. (2) *Childhood*, which extends from our being able
 to speak, to our fifteenth year, *Gen. xlv. 34.* 1 *Sam. xii. 2.* And,
 (3) *Youth*, which, according to *Varro*, commences at fifteen, and is
 continued till we are thirty years of age, *Joel i. 8.* The vulgate La-
 tin renders the word in our text, *from my infancy*.

with lustre, the cheek is flushed with bloom; and pains and diseases, lowness of spirits, and gradual decays of strength, are very often strangers to this period of human life. What season then so suitable for fearing the LORD, or becoming holy and religious, as this? Come give up the first-fruits of thy time, thou young person, the hope of thy family, and the hope of the church of GOD, unto the LORD. GOD deserves, and GOD claims thy first-fruits, and why wilt thou withhold them from him? Why should the buds and blossoms of thy spring fall a prey to thy worst enemies, sin and Satan, while GOD thy best friend has neither part nor lot in them? What is there in the ways of wickedness so tempting, or what is there in the wages of Satan so gainful, as that thou shouldst alienate the bloom of life from that GOD and Father who made thee; from that JESUS who died for sinners; and from that HOLY SPIRIT who graciously renews and sanctifies unholy and unworthy souls, and descends into them as the temples of his residence and glory? "Remember now thy Creator or Creators in the days of thy youth:" begin life in the remembrance of thy GOD, the pious and grateful remembrance of him, and in consequence of this remembrance devote thyself entirely and cheerfully to his service and glory; and consider what is immediately added as a motive to this early piety, "While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, in which thou shalt say, I have
" no

“ no pleasure in them (*e*).” ‘ Do not defer
 ‘ the remembrance of thy Creator till old age,
 ‘ whose days, for their burdens and complaints,
 ‘ may be called *evil days*, and whose tedious years
 ‘ may be only one dark irksome duration; rather
 ‘ a *lasting*, than for any comfortable enjoyments,
 ‘ or undisturbed and lively exercises of reason,
 ‘ a *living*.’ Why O young man, should the
 harvest of thy field, and the choice of thy vine-
 yard, thy first ripe grapes, be devoured by foolish
 and hurtful lusts, and become the plunder and
 triumph of Satan, while only the stubble and
 the gleanings of thy life are left for thy GOD?
 O, what a pleasant sight is it to behold youth
 ennobled with piety, and the graces of the
 Spirit mingling their divine glories with the
 vigour and beauties of nature, and thus con-
 secrating the flower of life into an holy oblation
 to the LORD!

(2.) Let me exhort young persons to fear the
 LORD, and to become holy and religious be-
 times, as the season of youth may, of all the
 seasons of life, be the most free from oppres-
 sive and disturbing anxieties and cares. When
 we commence men, and launch out into the
 businesses, occupations, and manifold connex-
 ions of mature age, and public life, how great it
 may be is our weight of concerns, and what
 numerous urgent demands are there for our
 time and thought from our families and the
 world? But childhood and youth are frequent-
 ly,

ly, at least in comparison, leisure and unruffled seasons. We are under the eye and management of our parents, friends, or masters, and our care as to this world is only to please and serve them; and if they are wise and good, their yoke will be easy, and their burden light. Let then this unincumbered, unanxious, undisturbed, this peculiarly calm and serene period of existence, be devoted to GOD and the great business of our salvation. Now let us learn to fear the LORD, and to become holy and religious. While the mind is not "careful about many things," many temporal and worldly things, let us attend to the one thing needful, and look up to that GOD "whose we are, and whom we ought to serve," and cry out with an holy importunity of spirit, "Where is GOD my maker?" and laying fast hold upon him, declare with an holy confidence in his mercy, that we will not let him go unless he bless us. Before we have begun our acquaintance with the world let us acquaint ourselves with GOD, and be at peace with him. Let these pages of life, the days of our youth, uncrowded, and it may be in a manner vacant as to all terrene concerns, be filled up with "Holiness to the LORD." Now "seek the kingdom of GOD, and his righteousness." Now cry unto GOD, and avouch him as the guide of your youth. Now implore an interest in his favour, who can guide you by his counsel through all the vicissitudes and labyrinths of life,

life, and in the end receive you to glory. Happy leisure of childhood or youth when it is employed for GOD, when our souls bow to him as our sovereign, when we embrace him as our portion, and when we put ourselves under his pilosity and patronage, which are so necessary for us when we either launch into this world, or are called to launch into the other!

(3.) Let me exhort young persons to fear the LORD, and become holy and religious betimes, as this is the season of life in which they are beginning to make a choice for themselves. Infancy is a kind of blank in life, and childhood, strictly distinguished, is a time of great weakness and immaturity of understanding, but in youth we begin to act the man, or at least aspire after the liberty and honours of the manly age. In youth we choose our trades, choose our associates, choose our situations in the world, and amidst your choices will you not choose the GOD whom ye will fear, and love, and enjoy? Will you not choose the great Father of all, and particularly the Father of your spirits, for your Father? Will you not choose JESUS for your Mediator and Saviour? And will you not choose the blessed SPIRIT for your guide, sanctifier, and comforter? Will you not choose the Word of GOD for your rule, the promises of GOD for your heritage, and the way of holiness, the way everlasting, the way to your everlasting happiness and home? Choose you in these days of your youth
whom

whom you will serve, whether an empty shadow, a fordid lust, a base enslaving passion, an hard master, Satan the enemy of souls, "cruel
" as death, and terrible as hell;" or whether you will serve the LORD, the all-glorious Majesty of heaven and earth, who has created you, preserved you, and blessed you, who alone can make you happy here, and happy for ever in his immeasurable and eternal power and love, and who has promised never to fail or forsake you? Choose you, I say again, whom you will serve— Shall I not have an answer from you in the sincerity and pleasure of your souls, "We
" will serve the LORD." "To whom, O
" LORD, shall we go but unto thee? thou hast
" the words of eternal life (*f*). Whom have
" we in heaven but thee? and there is none
" upon earth that we desire besides thee (*g*).

(4.) Let me exhort young persons to fear the LORD, and become holy and religious betimes, from the honour and blessings they may prove to their parents and families. Their parents have watched over them, brought them up, and nourished them with a kind incessant care. How liberally have they supplied their wants without any recompence or reward? How have they toiled and chearfully suffered, it may be great hardships, on their accounts? In sickness, in affliction, how tender their sympathies, and how often have they felt pain for pain, and echo'd groan for groan? And now when
parents

(*f*) John vi. 68.

(*g*) Psal. lxxiii. 25.

parents look for the fruit of their labours, when they hope that their children will prove sober and pious, dutiful to GOD, and obedient to them, shall they instead of a blessing find them a curse? Shall they "sow to the wind, and reap the whirlwind?" Shall they "gather instead of grapes thorns, and instead of figs thistles?" Shall their old age, which has sorrows and burdens enow of its own, be pressed down with the additional inexpressible load of undutifulness and disobedience from their offspring? Shall what they hoped would prove a staff of comfort prove a spear of anguish, and draw out the very blood of their hearts? And must they leave the world with the dismal sight of seeing their dear children fast bound in the chains of sin and Satan, and with no apparent hopes of meeting them another day at the right hand of CHRIST?

Think, O young persons, how base and disingenuous such a conduct as this is, and what worse than daggers you are plunging into the bosoms, the bowels of your parents, who have deserved from you all that duty you can possibly render them, for their fervent unwearied love and labours for your benefit, and who desire nothing other than your happiness both here and hereafter. But if, on the other hand, you fear GOD betimes, and honouring GOD you honour your father and mother, think what blessings you prove to your parents, and what honours to your families. Your parents see with
pleasure,

pleasure, an unknown pleasure, their branches rising around them, to spread a glory and, it may be, a shelter over their old age. They see themselves multiplied, and multiplied in blessing; and while you, their posterity, have the first joy in being holy and religious betimes, they have the second, a second joy did I call it, is not the reflexion of the joy upon them the parents, equal to the joy you feel yourselves? and with what comfort do they travel down the last stages of life, and enter the valley of the shadow of death, when their children are coming up in their stead with an holy fear of God possessing their minds, and discovering itself in all that amiable and heavenly walk which the gospel requires and recommends?

I would not imagine that I am speaking to any young persons that cannot feel this argument, and that would not startle at the thought that they should prove an heaviness to either the father that begat them or the mother that bore them, and bring down their hoary hairs with sorrow to the grave, let me then strengthen what has been said by adding, that the fifth commandment is the first commandment with promise; that the promise is a promise of temporal blessing, and that possibly there has been no one duty that has been more remarkably distinguished with the divine goodness in this life than that of obedience; and no sin more signally punished, even in our world, than that of disobedience to parents.

parents. Can I not now call up to my mind, I'll assure you I can, on the one hand, dutiful children who are now flourishing in worldly prosperity and comfort, and that seem the darlings of Providence; and on the other, undutiful children that are sunk into shame and poverty, or have already gone out of the world in deplorable want and wretchedness? What a sweet consciousness of obedience to parents, accompanied with the other fruits of holiness, may have often cheered the dying saint, and soothed the agonies of dissolving nature, while the groan under the gibbet has been, 'Sabbath-breaking and disobedience to my parents have brought me hither?'

(5.) Let me exhort young persons to fear the LORD, or to become holy and religious betimes, from the benefits and blessedness of early piety. Did you ever hear, my young friends, that any persons ever repented that they began to fear and serve GOD too soon? Did you ever meet with a person in old age or upon a dying bed, that ever complained and accused himself that he was religious too early in life, and that it had been better for him if he had spent more of his time in the delights of sin, before he took the yoke of CHRIST upon him? But have you not known, or have you not heard, on the other hand, of persons rejoicing, as good *Obadiah*, that they had feared the LORD from their youth, and blessing GOD in the last moments of life, and the last accents of a dying

dying tongue, that they had sought and found
GOD betimes? Have you not heard of, have
you not seen such persons honoured and use-
ful in life, and placid, comfortable, and tri-
umphant in death? Have they not been hap-
py in themselves, have they not been blessings
to the world, have they not died under the very
dawn of Heaven, the visions of eternal glo-
ry, and had an abundant entrance into the
kingdom of their LORD and SAVIOUR?
What think you of the leave that a young
person singularly pious took of the world in
the following words? ‘ I go to your Father
‘ and my Father, to your GOD and my GOD,
‘ to your King and my King; to the blessed
‘ Apostles and Martyrs, and to the city of the
‘ living GOD, the heavenly *Jerusalem*; to an
‘ innumerable company of Angels, to the ge-
‘ neral assembly and church of the First-born,
‘ and to GOD the Judge of all, and to the
‘ Spirits of just men made perfect, and to JE-
‘ sus the Mediator of the new covenant —
‘ And now I leave off to speak any more to
‘ creatures, and turn my speech to thee, O
‘ LORD! And now I begin my intercourse
‘ with GOD, which shall never be broken off.
‘ Farewel father, and mother, friends, and re-
‘ lations; farewel the world, and all delights;
‘ farewel meat and drink; farewel sun, moon
‘ and stars. Welcome GOD and FATHER;
‘ Welcome sweet JESUS, the Mediator of the
‘ new covenant; welcome blessed SPIRIT of
Z ‘ grace,

‘ grace, and GOD of all consolation. Welcome
 ‘ glory, welcome eternal life, welcome death—
 ‘ O LORD, into thine hands I commit my
 ‘ spirit; for thou hast redeemed my soul, LORD
 ‘ GOD of truth *.’ Need I ask the question,
 my young friends, whether you would not one
 and all desire to die this “ death of the righte-
 “ ous, and that your last end may be like
 “ theirs? ” Calm and sunshine at last would
 certainly be an agreeable experience; they are
 the epitome, the anticipation of heaven; and
 to these a pious life is the direct and the only
 road.

(6.) Let me exhort young persons to fear the
 LORD, and to become holy and religious be-
 times, from the sad consequences that have en-
 sued upon the season of youth being spent in
 folly and sin. Have you, my young friends,
 never seen or never heard of young persons who
 have abandoned themselves to iniquity, and
 have been cut off in the midst of their sins in
 a moment, perhaps in the very acts of Drunk-
 enness, Sabbath-breaking, or other impiety, or
 that have been seized in the midst of their wick-
 ed career with a fever, or some other mortal
 disease, and have died in horrors, in the keen-
 est remorse, in the most torturing pangs of
 conscience, as if hell itself was already opened
 within them, and its flames had seized upon
 them before the time? Or have you never
 heard

* Mr Hugh Mc Kail, in *Crookshanks's History of the Church of Scotland*, Vol. I. Pag. 236, 237.

heard of some poor wretches who have spent their youth in sin, that have been a plague to their families, a nuisance to the public, the abhorrence and execration of mankind, and that have ended their days in shame and poverty, and perhaps by the hands of public justice? Shall I present you, not with the imaginary, but the real distress of a young man, upon closing a profligate and sinful life?—

‘ During his health,’ says the excellent Mr Shower, who attended him, and who preached his funeral Discourse, ‘ he put far from him
‘ the evil day, and yet he was very apprehensive
‘ of a future judgment, and concerned at his
‘ own unpreparedness in his last sickness, most
‘ heartily confessing, and that with tears, that
‘ he had indulged to youthful lusts, delighted
‘ in wicked company, lived in the profanation
‘ of the Sabbath, and made a mock of every
‘ thing almost that was serious: and this notwithstanding the counsels of his friends, and
‘ some checks of his own conscience: sadly bemoaning his forlorn state, as having little or
‘ no hope to find mercy at the hand of God,
‘ and penitently confessing his own wilfulness
‘ and folly that procured it to himself; and
‘ thereupon cried out in the bitterness of his
‘ soul; “ Oh! had I believed and known what
“ now I do; I would have been more concerned to secure my everlasting interest; I
“ would have taken more care to avoid temptation; I would have employed my time to

“ better purpose, and attended the ministry of
 “ the word in another manner : but I fear it
 “ is now too late.” — Then with the greatest
 ‘ importunity he begged of GOD to pardon
 ‘ and forgive him for the sake of CHRIST :
 ‘ then tossing from place to place, wringing
 ‘ his hands, and lifting up his eyes to heaven
 ‘ with the affecting vehemence of a despairing
 ‘ soul, he besought the assistance of those about
 ‘ him to seek to GOD on his behalf :’ “ O pray
 “ for me, pray for me, for CHRIST’s sake
 “ pray for me, that if yet mercy may be had,
 “ the LORD would take pity on a miserable
 “ sinner. O my sins are a burden too heavy
 “ for me to bear ! I have sinned though GOD
 “ stood by and saw me. I have sinned though
 “ my conscience did rebuke me for it. I have
 “ sinned though I resolved to sin no more. I
 “ know not what to do, or which way to
 “ turn *.”

Say, my young friends, what avail all the
 forbidden sweets of sin, if they leave such stings
 as these in the conscience ? Who would take
 such a road, that ends in such agonies, and that
 thus mingles the horrors of the second death
 with the pains of the first ? Let me beg of you
 attentively to consider the blessed end I have
 described, of a pious young man, and this tre-
 mendous exit, for he was now upon his death-
 bed, of a profane and profligate youth, and deter-

* See Mr Shower’s Sermon on the occasion, intitled, *An Exhortation to Youth to prepare for Judgment*, published 1681. and prefaced by Mr Howe and Mr Alsop.

determine your choice from the lectures they read you, whether it is best to serve GOD, or serve him not.

(7.) Let me exhort young persons to fear the LORD, and become holy and religious betimes, from the uncertainty of life and health. Young as you are you are not too young to die, and can you then be too young to prepare for death? We may see the gay blossoms of the spring drop off and lie withering on the ground, as well as the leaves fall in autumn. Have you, I speak to young persons, any protection from death? Is there any privilege in the bud and bloom of life from the arrest of sickness, and the destruction of the grave? Alas! Fevers, Consumptions, and other distempers often make great havock among young persons. You dwell in an house of clay, your foundation is in the dust, and you may be crushed before the moth. How easy is it for GOD to change that fresh and florid complexion into a deathful paleness, and send you away? Fear then the LORD, be religious betimes. If your youth is devoted to the love and service of your GOD, you will be ready to glorify him here, or to enjoy him for ever; and you may expect, and how pleasant the expectation! an honourable and happy manhood, and old age, or an early heaven, and the arrival at a glorious immortality by a short passage through the wilderness. Blessed youths that fear the LORD! They are like flowers

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blown

blown at once for both worlds, either to enrich and bless the earth with their fragrancy, or to ascend up to GOD in an odour of a sweet smelling savour to be for ever with the LORD. I only add,

(8.) And lastly, Let me exhort young persons to fear the LORD, and become holy and religious betimes, from the consideration of the eminence to which they may arrive in holiness and comforts here, and to the distinguished degrees of glory they may attain hereafter, if they begin to serve GOD in their early days. Pious Mr *Henry* observes, upon its being said of *Obadiab* that "he feared the LORD greatly," in the third verse of our chapter, 'that he was 'not only a good man, but zealously and eminently good: his great place, Steward of the 'Household of *Ahab*, put a lustre upon his 'goodness, and gave him great opportunities of 'doing good.' And then this valuable Expositor adds upon what our text declares, that *Obadiab* "feared the LORD from his youth," that '*Obadiab* began betimes to be religious, 'and had long continued so. Early piety, it 'is to be hoped, will be eminent piety. They 'that are good betimes, are likely to be very 'good. He that feared GOD from his youth, 'feared him greatly.' Who knows to what pitches of godliness we may arrive, if we begin betimes? We may hope that our path will be as the morning light, that shines more and more to a perfect day. Rich and blessed experiences

riences and comforts may crown the sunset of that life, whose beginning has been "as a morning without a cloud." How pleasant to be able to say with the Psalmist, "O GOD, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works!" And what encouragement have we for our hopes that our prayer shall be answered, when we add, "Now also when I am old, and gray-headed, O GOD, forsake me not (b)?" That GOD whom we have chosen as the guide of our youth, we may expect will be the staff of our old age; and if at evening-time we would have light, let us see to it that our dawn be not clouded and overcast by ignorance of GOD, and rebellion against him. And let it be further considered, that distinguished degrees of glory may await those souls in the regions above that fear their GOD betimes, not as the fruit of their own merit, but as the wise appointment of their GOD, and the rewards of his grace. If as "one star differs from another star in glory," so it will be at the resurrection of the dead, what eminent lustres may we expect will adorn those saints who have feared their GOD from their youth? How bright will these morning-stars be seen in the celestial hemisphere, nay how will they shine forth with a sun-like glory in the kingdom of their Father?

Thus have I, my young friends, endeavoured to lay before you what we are to understand

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by

(b) Psal. lxxi. 17, 18.

by fearing the LORD, and I have, from some of the most suitable and cogent reasons that my meditations upon the subject could suggest, exhorted you to fear the LORD, and become holy and religious betimes: "But I thy servant," says good *Obadiab*, "fear the LORD from my youth."

A word of Advice shall conclude my Discourse. Do not set about the great business of fearing GOD, and becoming holy and religious betimes, in your own strength. That you may fear GOD, and become holy and religious in your early days, seek to GOD for his grace in fervent and incessant prayer. Beseech the God of the spirits of all flesh, and in whose hands our hearts as well as our lives are, to give you what he commands. Beg of him in the name of JESUS CHRIST, and at the footstool of his mercy-seat, to draw you, that you may run after him; to incline your hearts to his good ways; to "create in you a clean heart, and renew within you a right spirit;" and as he enjoins you, "to keep his precepts diligently," lift up your souls to him in importunate and constant supplications; "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes (*i*)."

He has given you a promise in his new covenant which directly suits your wants, and which you must not fail to plead before him: "And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever." — "And I will make an
" ever-

(*i*) Psal. cxix. 4, 5.

“everlasting covenant with them, that I will
“not turn away from them to do them good;
“but I will put my fear in their hearts, that
“they shall not depart from me (*k*).” To that
fulness which it has pleased the Father should
dwell in CHRIST do you be looking for grace
to begin, to carry on, and perfect the work of
holiness in your souls. Nothing will be too
hard for you, if CHRIST does but strengthen
you; and when did he ever refuse that soul
that sought to him, and that put its trust in
him? And is it not a truth as certain now as
it was in the day that CHRIST himself first ut-
tered it, “Him that comes unto me, I will in
“no wise cast out (*l*)?” There are two pe-
titions which I hope you will never omit in
your addresses to the throne of grace, till you
have some good ground to conclude that you
are possessed of the blessings requested in them:
“God be merciful to me a sinner (*m*);” and
“turn thou me, and I shall be turned (*n*):”
and while you are thus praying, how readily
will your Parents and Ministers say, “The
“blessing of the LORD be upon you; we bless
“you in the name of the LORD (*o*):” and
“The LORD grant you according to your own
“heart, and fulfil all your counsel (*p*).” —
Amen, and Amen.

(k) Jer. xxxii. 39, 40.*(l)* John vi. 37.*(m)* Luke xviii. 15.*(n)* Jer. xxxi. 18.*(o)* Psalm cxxix. 8.*(p)* Psalm xx. 4.



*An H Y M N, suited to the
foregoing Sermon.*

I.

GOOD *Obadiab* from his youth
Could say, and speak the words of truth,
“ That he the G O D of *Isr’el* fear’d,
“ And his great Name and Laws rever’d.”

II.

Ye young, this declaration hear ;
Be *Isr’el*’s G O D your constant fear ;
That manhood, and declining age,
With joy may read life’s earliest page.

III.

Whom shouldst thou fear but G O D alone ?
Creation hangs upon his throne,
With all its worlds : and souls await
From his award their final state.

IV.

Why should th’ infernal Foe devour
Of life the blossom and the flow’r,
While thy best friend, thy G O D receives
The poor remains of with’ring leaves ?

V.

To make the LORD betimes your choice
Is Reason's and Religion's voice :
Who ever mourn'd at last that they
Too soon submitted to his sway ?

VI.

But O ! what agonies unknown
Have weigh'd, have sunk their spirits down,
Who never learnt their GOD to fear
Till Death with his dire dart drew near ?

VII.

To serve the LORD of all betimes
Saves us from sorrows as from crimes ;
Peace smiles unclouded thro' our day,
And gilds our ev'ning with its ray.

VIII.

For Life for Death we stand prepar'd,
And soon shall hear the bless'd award,
" Come, to my arms and glory come ;
" Heav'n, once your hope, is now your home."

SERMON

23 SE60



S E R M O N XIV.

The aged Saint's readiness for Death
and Glory.



J O B V. 26.

*Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age ; like
as a shock of corn comes in in its season.*

THESE words were spoken by
Eliphaz, one of *Job's* three friends
that came to make him a visit in
his deplorable circumstances of
poverty and distress. True in-
deed it is, that this *Eliphaz*, and his two other
brethren, in their converses with *Job*, bore very
hard upon him, and indeed formed very erro-
neous sentiments, and passed very unjust cen-
sures upon him ; inferring from his very grie-
vous and amazing sorrows, that he must be a
very vile and enormous sinner. But though
they were wrong in their judgments, and un-
righteous

righteous in their charges upon *Job*, yet they undoubtedly delivered many very proper and pertinent, very just and excellent sentiments in their speeches, and such as are well worthy of our remembrance and regard. Particularly the account which *Eliphaz* here gives of a good man well deserves our attention, and the great **God**, the holy and gracious governor of our world, may have been found in many instances to have acted according to the description which is here given of him. "Behold," says *Eliphaz*, verse 17. "happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty." The divine corrections are not arbitrary, or without reason, nor are they in their designs and effects vain and insignificant, but on the other hand, they are the products of justice and wisdom, and the intention of them is to do our souls real service, and the man who is corrected by heaven is to be so far from looking upon himself as miserable, that he is therefore to account himself happy, and has reason to bless his God for those painful and bitter dispensations; his seasonable physic being as useful, though not so palatable, as the full-spread table, and overflowing cup. Accordingly, instead of despising the chastisements of the Almighty, rather look upon them as blessings, and account them as tokens of the wise parental regard your heavenly Father bears towards you, and as appointed to prevent much worse evils, and turn
your

your feet into the paths of holiness, which are no other than the paths of happiness. Especially if at the same time you consider what God can do for you after your season of salutary discipline is past, and the chastenings of the Almighty have answered their ends upon you. "For he makes sore," adds *Eliphaz*, verse 18, "and binds up; he wounds, and his hands make whole. He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death; and in war from the power of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue; neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it comes. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh; neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth. For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee. And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace; and thou shalt visit thine habitation, and not sin. Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth." And thus are introduced the words of our text. "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn comes in in its season. Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age." As thy days shall shine with all this prosperity and joy, so they shall not be few, but they shall attain, if not exceed the usual term of human life.

life. "Like as a shock of corn comes in in its
 "season." The original word here translated
shock of corn, signifies a collection or heap of
 corn, and may denote particularly a *stack* of
 corn, or a large quantity of corn laid regularly
 together; as when we read "of fire breaking
 "out, and catching in thorns, so as to con-
 "sume the stack of corn (a)." Or the original
 Word may be rendered a *shock*, that is, a pile
 of sheaves of corn; and so it is translated
 in that passage where we read "of the foxes
 "with firebrands tied between them, running
 "into the standing corn of the Philistines, and
 "burning up both the shocks, and also the
 "standing corn (b)." And with great pro-
 priety, I apprehend, the word in our text is
 rendered a *shock* of corn, as *Eliphaz* had his eye
 rather upon corn in the field or the floor, than
 when regularly piled up in the stack. Let me
 further observe, that there is something re-
 markable in the expression *comes in* in its season.
 The original word * may be more literally ren-
 dered *ascendeth* in its season. The very valuable
 commentator Mr *Caryl* makes this observation,
 "but does not determine ' whether there is an
 ' allusion to the hope and faith of the saints
 ' in their death, so that they do but ascend
 ' when they die, or whether there is a re-
 ' ference to the disappearance of saints as to the
 ' eye

(a) *Exod.* xxii. 6.(b) *Judg.* xv. 5.

* עֲלָה אֶפְעִלוֹחַ Scandit, ascendit. Sicut tollitur acervus
 tritici in tempore suo. Parap. Chald. Vers. Latin.

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famine and the most direful misery must ensue: and the saints of GOD are persons of great worth and usefulness. They may be indeed treated by the world as the off-scouring of all things, and the world may be so far from shewing them the respect they deserve, that they may affront, contemn, trample upon them, and most inhumanly persecute them; but still they are exceeding precious in the eyes of GOD and CHRIST: they are as the lily among thorns, as jewels amidst dross, as salt amidst general corruption, as lights amidst overspreading darkness, as sheep among wolves, and as doves among serpents. The Most High and Holy GOD, who forms the truest estimate of persons and things, and who best knows what is worth and what is not, loves the saints, and loves them with a distinguishing love; and JESUS loves them too, and he is theirs, and they are his, and "he will give unto them eternal life; "and they shall never perish, neither shall any "pluck them out of his hands (*c*). " Good angels likewise esteem them as their brethren and fellow-servants. They are gladly employed "as ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation (*d*); they encamp about the saints (*e*): " they are their guard, and with their invisible shields, it may be, turn aside many an hurtful and fiery dart from them. And when the saints of GOD die, angels are their convoy from these lower regions to their Father's house; and the soul

(c) John x. 28.*(d)* Heb. i. 14.*(e)* Psal. xxxiv. 7.

soul of a *Lazarus*, just escaped from a noisome ulcerous body, left to putrify, it may be, upon a dunghil, was not thought an unworthy burden to the wings of angels (*f*). Again, the saints of God are honoured by each other: they love one another; they are glad to see their LORD's image upon each others hearts; they pray for each other; and they associate together in sacred and delightful worship, as children of the same Father, brethren of the same LORD JESUS, and heirs of the same heavenly and eternal glory. "My goodness," says *David*, or it may be they are the words of a greater than *David*, even of JESUS, both his Son and his Lord, "extends not to thee, but to the saints "that are in the earth, and to the excellent, "in whom is all my delight (*g*)." Little as the world thinks itself obliged to the saints of God, it certainly is obliged, and much obliged to them. No fire from Heaven shall be rained down upon wicked *Sodom*, if ten righteous persons are found in it; and till righteous *Lot* has left the city, no commission is given for the horrible tempest to descend and overwhelm it in ruin. "Except the LORD of Hosts "had left unto us (says the Prophet *Isaiab*) a "small remnant, we should have been as *Sodom*, "and like unto *Gomorrhah* (*h*)." It may be that the few despised saints among us in these kingdoms have been the barriers to prevent the divine judgments from breaking in upon, and

A a 2

destroying

(*f*) Luke xvi. 26.(*g*) Psal. xvi. 2, 3.(*h*) Isai. i. 9.

destroying our land. God might have long since scattered his firebrands of vengeance among us, and consumed us from his earth, as dry stubble and worthless chaff, had it not been for the good grain mingled among us; which, though it may be but as the gleanings of the harvest, yet is of too great value to be lost, or perish in the storms of the divine indignation. When the last great conflagration shall be kindled, there shall not be found one saint that shall be cast into the burning, either that of earth, or the inextinguishable fires of hell.

(2.) The saints of God may be compared to corn, because as corn must die in the ground before it brings forth fruit, so must believers die before they can put on life and eternal glory. "Verily, verily, says our LORD, except a corn
 " of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it
 " abides alone; but if it die, it brings forth
 " much fruit (*i*)."
 Wheat must be cast into the ground, and die before it can yield its rich increase; and so must the saints of God die, and be laid in the grave, before they can with a large revenue of advantage and interest put on immortal life and glory. "But some men
 " will say, How are the dead raised up? and
 " with what bodies do they come? Thou fool,
 " that which thou sowest is not quickened, ex-
 " cept it die. And that which thou sowest,
 " thou sowest not that body that shall be, but
 " bare grain, it may chance of wheat or some
 " other

(*i*) John xii. 24.

"other grain. But GOD gives it a body as it
"hath pleased him (*k*)."

In this passage of the apostle three things are observable. The difficulty of the resurrection is obviated. If GOD suffers wheat to die in the ground, and then quickens it, may he not suffer these bodies to die, and then raise them to life again? Again, the *bare* or *naked* grain of wheat or other corn is cast into the ground; and what a striking emblem is herein exhibited of the condition of man at death, for what glory is there that attends him to the grave? He goes down to the earth naked and stript, stript bare of all his worldly possessions, and boasted pomp and splendors. Death destroys the vain show in which he walked, breaks every bubble of pride, and throws us upon an ignominious level as to our bodies with the brutes that perish. "The dust returns to the earth
"as it was (*l*). And further the apostle observes, that we sow not that body which shall be, but GOD gives it a body as it hath pleased him. O! what a blessed transformation shall there be in this body at the resurrection? No longer shall it be the seat of perverse, and it may be, headstrong inclinations; no longer shall it be a clog to the in-dwelling spirit: there shall be no more pains and aches, no more weakness nor infirmity, but every spot, every scar of the apostasy shall be left behind in the dust; and as wheat is cast into the ground a

A a 3

bare

(*k*) 1 Cor. xv. 35.(*l*) Eccles. xii. 7.

bare naked grain, but brings forth by death a rich and amazing increase, so shall it be with our bodies. "The body is sown in corruption, " it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in " dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown " in weakness, it is raised in power. It is " sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual " body (*m*). " This body must die. As sure as it was born, so surely it shall die. The sentence is past, the irrevocable sentence, and we see it every day executing in our world. But though death will most certainly pass upon us, yet to the saints of God it is transformed into a blessing: for though the bodies of the saints are laid into the grave, and must there see corruption, yet they shall be raised again, " and " fashioned like unto CHRIST's glorious body, " according to the working whereby he is able " to subdue all things to himself (*n*). " CHRIST himself shall ere long come and unlock our graves, quicken our sleeping clay, and clothe them with immortality and glory. The grave is but as the furnace to purge away our dross; and after the body has stayed there for a time, it shall come forth as gold seven times, nay even more than seventy times seven, purified. Be not then afraid, O believer, of death. Thou diest that thou mayest live; thou puttest off these tattered garments of mortal, corruptible flesh, that thou mayest ere long put on the robes of eternal beauty and glory. Shall God
cause

(*m*) 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43, 44.(*n*) Phil. iii. 21.

cause a grain of corn to yield such a plentiful produce by dying, and cannot he cause thy body to rise from the dominion of death and the grave, with a thousand-fold more advantage than what it possessed in the days of thy sojournment in it while upon earth? The valley of the shadow of death is the high road to the realms of immortal life and blessedness. The cold stream of death shall waft thee into the fulness of joy in thy Father's presence. CHRIST lives, who was dead, and is alive for evermore; and the same measure that has been meted to our head, shall be meted to all his members. Because "CHRIST lives, we shall live also (o). Our life is hid with CHRIST in GOD (p). We are planted in the likeness of his death, and so shall we also be planted in the likeness of his resurrection (q);" and that in the real as well as spiritual sense.

(3.) The saints of GOD may be compared to corn, because as corn grows, so do the saints of GOD grow in grace. You need not be informed that there is a growth in corn. "And he (that is our LORD) said, So is the kingdom of GOD, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up he knows not how. For the earth brings forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth,

A a 4

" forth,

(o) John xiv. 19.

(p) Col. iii. 4.

(q) Rom. vi. 5.

" forth, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest is come (*r*)."

How wonderful is the growth of corn! First the seed dies, then life works under the clods; next appears the blade, after this the top of the blade forms itself into an ear, then the ear swells, mellows, and hardens, and so the wheat is made ready for the harvest! And is not here an emblem of the work of grace in the soul? At first it is but small, but by degrees it grows up and increases, till the believer at last, like a flock of corn fully ripe, is made meet for his in-gathering, his reception into his Father's kingdom and glory. " They that are planted " in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the " courts of our God (*s*). They go from " strength to strength till they appear in the " heavenly Mount Zion before God (*t*). Their " path is that of the morning light that shines " more and more to a perfect day (*u*). " The longer believers live, (surely this is the experience of some souls, would to GOD it was an universal and immutable experience!) the more confirmed are they in the habits of holiness, the more their fear and love of GOD, and the more their faith and hope in their blessed Saviour, increase; the more patient and self-denying, the more humble and contented, the more weaned from this world, and the more earnest and eager after a better they grow, by how

(*r*) Mark iv. 26—30. (*s*) Psal. xcii. 13. (*t*) Psal. lxxxiv. 7. (*u*) Prov. iv. 18.

how much the longer their stay upon earth. Service and fruitfulness measure and crown their duration. Time advances, and so does holiness. They hear the word and understand it, and it bears fruit, and brings forth some an hundred-fold, some sixty, and some thirty. Even old age that impairs other things, cannot impair the divine life, but it grows stronger and stronger. Amidst the decays, the mouldering ruins of nature, grace preserves its splendor; nay, and shines it may be with augmented glories. “As the outward man decays, the inward man is renewed day by day (*).”

‘ I remarked (says a devout and ingenious writer*) that towards the time of the harvest the grain ripened apace; a few days would shew a considerable difference. The large dews by night, and the glowing Sun by day, and some intermingled showers withal, concurred to this event. And hath not this been the case of some Christians! O that it may be mine and yours, my good friend! May every day, even the most distant, be a day ripening for glory! but may this be my experience in a peculiar manner, as I am approaching death and judgment!—May all the variety of Providence I meet with be the means of maturing my soul, attempering me to the heavenly world, and working out for me a far more exceeding and

(*) 2 Cor. iv. 16. * The Rev. Mr Richard Pearfall on the Harvest, vol. I. p. 167. of his excellent Contemplations.

‘ and eternal weight of glory! At length may
 ‘ I be like the corn fully ripe, inviting, as it
 ‘ were, the reaper’s sickle, by being quite pre-
 ‘ pared for the garner!’ Let me add,

(4.) And lastly, That the saints of God may be compared to corn, in that as corn is nourished and ripened by the influences of Heaven, so the saints of God likewise derive their growth and maturity from the blessing of Heaven upon them. How could our corn grow up without the warm and genial powers of the Sun, and without the rich impregnating moisture of the Heavens in rains and dews? And sun-shine and shower must be interchanged, and the corn must not have all sun-shine, for thus would it become lean and thirsty, and indeed be burnt up; nor must it have on the other hand an incessant effusion of showers, for thus it would never be consolidated and mellowed, but our harvest would become a worthless “ heap in the “ day of grief and desperate sorrow (y).” And is not here an emblem of the influences of our God upon the souls of his people? Does he not visit his people with his grace after they are become his people, and having begun the good work in them, carry it on till the day of JESUS CHRIST? “ God is a sun and a shield (says the “ Psalmist) the LORD will give grace and glory. “ No good thing will he withhold from them “ who walk uprightly (z). I will be as the “ dew unto *Israel*,” says the LORD by the prophet

Hosea.

(y) *Isai.* xvii. 11.

(z) *Psal.* lxxxiv. 11.

Hosea (a). And again, "the LORD's going forth is prepared as the morning, and he shall come as the rain, as the latter and the former rain upon the earth (b). We are kept by the power of GOD through faith unto salvation (c)." Sometimes we have the light of GOD's countenance lifted up upon us, like as the Sun sometimes shines in its strength over the vegetable creation, and then our souls are drawn forth in love and delight in GOD our Saviour, and we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Again, GOD hides his face from us, but still the divine influences attend even these darker seasons. "We are enabled to trust in the LORD, and stay ourselves upon our GOD, even when we are walking in darkness, and see no light (d)." The clouds are the paths of our heavenly Father's feet, and they drop fatness upon us. We are taught many a good lesson, even from our gloomy seasons. We are emptied of pride and vain self-sufficiency; we learn to prize or improve more the divine manifestations; we learn against hope to believe in hope; and we learn with a deeper sense than ever to annihilate ourselves, that our GOD may be all in all. Thus all the way our GOD leads us, all his procedures towards us, and his influences upon us, end well, and bring us at last to the heavenly kingdom and glory. I come,

II. To

(a) Hosea xiv. 5.

(b) Hosea vi. 3.

(c) 1 Pet. i. 5.

(d) Isai. l. 10.

II. To inquire for what reasons the saints of GOD may be resembled to a shock of corn. "Like as a shock of corn (says *Eliphaz*) comes "in in its season." And the saints of GOD may be resembled to a *shock* of corn,

(1.) Because of the variety of their graces. In the people of GOD what a variety of graces are found? "The fruit of the Spirit is love, "joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, good-
"ness, faith, meekness, and temperance (e)." In the people of GOD there is faith that lays hold upon an Invisible GOD and Almighty Saviour. There is hope which is the anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, entering within the veil, whither JESUS the forerunner is entered, and which looks out from present troubles and distresses, and solaces the spirit in the views of the future promised glory. In the saints of GOD there is love, love to GOD, love to JESUS the Saviour; and this love leads them to practise their commands, to converse much with them, and to bear whatsoever burdens they are pleased to lay upon them. In the children of GOD also there is patience, that patience that enables the soul becomingly to endure the pressures of present trials, and becomingly to endure the delays of the heavenly blessedness. And what other graces might there not be mentioned, such as self-denial, mortification, holy watchfulness, deadness to the world, humility,

(e) Gal. v. 22, 23;

mility, meekness, spirituality of disposition, conquest over irregular passions and appetites, charity, justice, truth, and the like amiable constituents of the christian temper? "We are said to put on the new man (*f*), and are said to be born of the Spirit (*g*).¹ Now a *man*, a *birth*, denote not a single joint or limb, but a complete person, a regular and harmonious system of different parts and members; and such in a spiritual sense are the true saints of God. As a flock, or even a sheaf of corn, is composed of many ears, so religion, true religion, consists of manifold graces.

(2.) The saints of God may be resembled to a flock of corn because of their maturity. A flock of corn is ready for the stack or the barn. While the corn stands in the field, it may not be ripe; but when it comes into the flock, it is mature, and the next business is safely to house it. And O! what a ripeness is found among some saints! They seem to be quite ready for their in-gathering. Their attachments and ties to the world are dissolved; holiness has drawn its brightest beauties upon them; they are breathing after the heavenly country, and earnestly looking out for the delaying wheels of death, that they may be conveyed home to glory. They are contented to live in a dutiful submission and homage to their great Master, but they are willing "rather to depart and to be with CHRIST, which is far better." They are in

(*f*) Col. iii. 10. (*g*) John iii. 5.

in a readiness for death, for eternity; and, like the bird in the cage, are practising their wings for flight into the full liberty and glorious visions of eternal day. It remains,

III. And lastly, That I should show you what may be designed by the saints of God being said to "come to their graves like as a shock of corn comes in in its season." And,

(1.) By its being said that the saints of God come to their graves like as a shock comes in in its season, may be meant, that they have filled up the measure of human life. You will observe that it is said first of all, "thou shalt come to thy grave in full age;" and then it is added, as a sort of still further representation of this full age, "like as a shock of corn comes in in its season." The days of our years are "threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they are fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away (b)." Though a true saint, whenever he dies, let him die in old age, in middle life, or in youth, may be compared to a shock of corn coming in in its season, as he cannot die an untimely death, or before he is ready; yet when a faithful, and, as it were, full-grown servant of God, who has lived to the age of man, who has quite filled up or even exceeded the number of the years of life, who has become hoary in holiness, is at this juncture,

(b) Psal. xc. 10.

juncture, and with these circumstances, taken away, he may be said more eminently, more emphatically to come to his grave "in full age, "like as a flock of corn comes in in its season."

Nature and grace are both consenting to his dismissal. Wishing such an one a longer stay on earth, is only wishing him a longer *lasting*, such is the state of his declining, sinking, languishing body, rather than a *living*: the season, the proper season is come for the flock of corn to be carried home; and the hour of his removal from the field of the church into the garner above, is rather to be congratulated and welcomed, than dreaded and deplored. While we cannot but lament, that sometimes the first ripe fruits are taken away, and that persons of eminent piety and usefulness are cut off in the midst of their days, yet what can we object against God's removing his aged servants, and admitting them to heaven, when their work is done upon earth, and their further years of life can only be expected to be years of trouble and sorrow; every year pressing down their souls with still heavier and heavier burdens, and rendering their sojournment in their frail tottering tabernacles still more and more irksome and uncomfortable? Night is come, the shadows of the evening are stretched out, why then should not the labourers go home to rest?

(2.) May we not from the expressions of the saints of God coming to their graves like as a flock of corn comes in in its season, be taught the

the gentleness and ease of their dismissal by death? How does a shock of corn come in in its season? Is it not gently carried to the barn or to the stack, and there gently piled up, that none of the precious grain may be scattered and lost? And O! how gently are the bands of animal existence dissolved in some saints! How softly are they laid to rest! Not only without any agonies or terrors upon the mind, but without any pains or distresses of body, they gently step out of life into their Father's kingdom and glory. They hardly feel their unclothing, so suddenly and easily do the garments of their flesh fall off from them. There is as little of death felt in their dying as if it was a translation; or as if, *Elijah*-like, they were only to part with their mantle in their ascent to glory. They close their eyes, and see their GOD. They serve their generation according to the will of GOD, and then fall asleep, and that with as little that is disagreeable and painful, as the tired pilgrim or the weary labourer feels, when at night he drops gently into sleep, and knows not the next morning when or how. The spiritual *Jordan* is made to open a free passage to them, as the *Jordan* of old did to the *Israelites*; and the people of GOD are so far from wading through deeps, or being terrified with angry billows, that they do not so much as feel the cold stream, nor are they once sensible that even so much as "their feet are
" dipped

"dipped in the brim of the water" to allude to what is said *Josb.* iii. 15. Let me add,

(3.) And lastly, May we not from the expressions of coming to our graves like as shocks of corn in their season, be led to consider the joy with which the saints of GOD are removed from our world? What a pleasure is there in the husbandman when he is bringing home his golden sheaves; and with what delight does he lodge them in his barn, or pile them up in his stack? And accordingly we read of "joying according to the joy of harvest (*k*)."
 Hereby being denoted no doubt a very great and lively joy. 'Here, says the husbandman, when his barns are receiving his rich treasures from the field, is the reward of my plowing, and sowing, and manuring my ground. I waited with long patience for this happy day, and now it is come. I bore forth my precious seed weeping, but now I am bringing my sheaves with me.' And O! what joy in like manner is there when a saint is gathered home to glory like a shock of corn in its season? There is joy, speaking after the manner of men, in the GOD and Father of all, in that his designs of grace and mercy are now accomplished. There is joy in the SON of GOD and the Saviour of sinners, in that "he now sees the travail of his soul, and is satisfied (*l*)."
 There is joy in the SPIRIT of Grace, in that another soul whom he has renewed, sanctified,

B b

and

(*k*) *Isai.* ix. 3. (*l*) *Isai.* liii. 11.

and comforted, is now brought safe to heaven. And if there is joy in heaven among the angels of GOD at the conversion of a sinner, as we are certain there is (*m*), why not at his arrival at eternal glory? If there is joy at the beginning, why not at the consummation of his happiness? And is there no joy in the saint himself, when he comes into heaven like a shock of corn in its season? How does the ripe corn, as it were, ask the sickle, and when it comes into the shock, the barn; and how often has the true saint, under the burdens and trials of life, and with a rich growth and maturity in grace, asked for his heaven, and longed to be for ever with the LORD? And O! what unutterable transports must he feel, when he finds the everlasting gates lifted up, and himself bid welcome, bid to enter into his Master's joy. He comes to heaven as the shock of corn in its season. And what sort of season is it in which the corn is gathered? 'Tis in the summer season, the very glory of the year. Corn is not gathered amidst the storms, and fleets, and cold, and darkness of winter, but in the placid, bright, and pleasant days of the summer. And with how much pleasure do we find saints sometimes dying, and especially, it may be, good old disciples? I will not answer for all that *Maimonides*, a celebrated *Jewish* writer, says; but does he not describe something not very unlike the joys in which some saints of GOD may have left

(*m*) Luke xv. 10.

left our world? ' By how much, says he, the
 ' powers of the body are weakened, and the
 ' fire of earthly love is abated, by so much the
 ' understanding is strengthened, its light in-
 ' creased, and the apprehension purified; and
 ' the mind so much rejoices in that which it
 ' apprehends, that when the perfect man ar-
 ' rives at full age, and draws near to death,
 ' his apprehension of divine things, his plea-
 ' sures from that apprehension, and his love of
 ' what he apprehends, are so much enlarged,
 ' that the soul in this season of its joys is sepa-
 ' rated from the body. Such a death as this
 ' our wise men had in view, when they observe
 ' concerning the deaths of *Moses* and *Aaron*, that
 ' they died with a kiss; for they teach us,
 ' that when *Moses* the servant of the LORD is
 ' said to have died in the land of the LORD, at
 ' the mouth of the LORD *, we are to under-
 ' stand that his soul departed in a kiss; and the
 ' like of *Aaron*.—The sense is, that they expired
 ' through the intenseness of their love in the
 ' pleasures of their thoughts of God.'—The re-
 ' flexion he adds is admirable; ' Wherefore la-
 ' bour with all your might, that you may mul-
 ' tiply those times in which you converse with
 ' God, or endeavour to make your approaches
 ' to him; and lessen those hours in which you
 ' are in the company of others, and make no
 ' attempts for communion with God †.'

B b 2

For

* על-פי יְהוָה

† Maiemonidis More Nevochim, Part iii. Cap. 51. ad finem.

For an application and improvement of the subject,

1. Let us be seriously and earnestly concerned that we may be justly compared to corn, and to shocks of corn that are gathered in their season. Come to our graves, and come to eternity we undoubtedly shall and must, willing or unwilling; but what a dismal distressing thought is it that we should come to our graves and to eternity, as worthless chaff, cumberers or nuisances of the ground, or as tares bound up in bundles to be burnt? Let us see to it that we are good grain, profitable and useful to all around us, and grateful and honourable to our Divine Master and Owner: thus though we die, it shall be only to live again; and the gate of death shall be the gate of life and immortality. If we hope we are true Christians, let us prove that our profession and our expectations are not vain, in that we grow and increase with all the increases of God; and, like good grain, strike our roots downward, and bring forth fruit upwards. Are shocks of corn composed of numerous ears, and enriched with good grain? so let us see to it that we are filled with all the graces of the SPIRIT; and let us not, while we regard one part of our holy religion, neglect another. If we are devout towards God, let us see to it that we are just towards men. As it is said of *Simeon*, that the same "man was just and
" de-

“devout (*n*).” Let not one grace seem to grow into a luxuriance, at the same time that other graces, no less ornamental to our christian character, are checked, and, it may be, almost neglected and starved. Let us call in one grace to be a guide and governor to another. Are we compassionate and generous? let us be just and honest. Are we just and honest? let us be compassionate and generous. Do we love the house of God, and diligently attend its ordinances and worship? let us not overlook the affairs of civil life, and the duties of our own houses. Or do we attend to the concerns of our callings, and the duties of our families? let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, and set at nought the prayers and praises of the sanctuary. In like manner I might instance in other particulars: In a word, let religion be an harmonious system, a combination, a constellation of graces, such as directly and immediately bring glory to God, such as teach us the proper government of ourselves, and such as shine in blessing and holy example to all mankind. “Let us “live soberly, righteously, and godly (*a*). Let “us do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly “with our God (*p*).” Let not one grace seem to swallow up the rest. Let all with whom we are connected, in their proper places, and at proper opportunities, have their just dues and demands upon us answered; and then shall

B b 3

we

(*n*) Luke ii. 25.(*a*) Titus iii. 12.(*p*) Micah vi. 8.

we be not naked grains, not loose ears, but sheaves and shocks of corn: and if these things are in us, and abound, we shall be ready, whenever the great Proprietor calls, to leave the field of the church, and pass into our Father's kingdom and glory. Whether we die earlier or later, we shall come to our graves like shocks of corn in their season; and may hope that we shall have a gentle dismissal from earth, and an abundant entrance into our Master's joy. "Blessed are those servants that when their LORD comes, are found so doing (q)."

2. If we have good grounds to conclude that we are true saints, let us be solicitous that we may grow in grace, and may be hastening into maturity and perfection. Ere long the time of harvest will come, let us then, like good corn in the field, be daily growing, increasing in holiness, that we may be ripe for the sickle of death, and the garner of glory. Let not times and seasons roll over us in vain, but let every week and day be a preparatory week, a preparatory day for the inheritance among the saints in light. Time stands not, heaven and earth stand not, but are ever in motion to fulfil their appointed courses; and shall immaterial, reasonable, immortal spirits, the chief among this lower creation of God, be stagnant, or even sluggish, when they have a race before them of glory, honour, and immortality? Let us

us go, not from strength to weakness, "but
"from strength to strength, till we shall ap-
"pear in Zion before GOD (*r*)."
How much ashamed should we be that we make such little
advances towards the perfection and beauty of
holiness? How do we languish and tire in the
best of courses? How little do we improve and
thrive in the noblest of all growths? Let us be
daily dying unto sin, and living unto righte-
ousness. Let us, like the corn in the field,
eagerly imbibe the nourishing and enlivening
dew, and expand ourselves to receive the full
beams of our GOD, our invigorating Sun. Let
us be importunately desirous "that we may
"grow as the lily, and cast forth our roots as
"*Lebanon*; that our branches may spread, that
"our beauty may be as the olive-tree, and our
"smell as *Lebanon* (*s*). Being planted in the
"house of the LORD, let us flourish in the
"courts of our GOD, and bring forth fruit
"even in old age (*t*)."
Thus, whether we stay here on earth till old age, or whether we
resign life in our manhood, or even in our
youth, we shall come to our graves like a
shock of corn in its season, and be prepared ei-
ther to glorify GOD here, or to go home and
dwell with Him for ever. And in order that
we may thus grow in grace, and be hastening
into maturity and perfection, let us be diligent
in the use of all appointed means, that we may

B b 4

obtain

(r) Psal lxxxiv. 7.*(s)* Hosea xiv. 5, 6.*(t)* Psal. xcii. 13, 14.

obtain so great and so desirable a blessing. The husbandman is very careful to sow his grain where it may lie open to the influences of heaven. He sows it not in his barn or wood, where the solar rays, and the descent of the dews and rains would be intercepted; but he sows it in the open fields and plains, where the Sun shines with a full power, and the enriching moisture of the skies may be immediately and plentifully enjoyed. Is not here instruction for us? How careful should we be that no worldly cares or sensitive pleasures should cast their dark shadow over our souls, and prevent heavenly good from descending upon us? Let us lie open to the visits, to the influences of our GOD. "Let us wait at wisdom's gates, and let us watch at the posts of her doors, in hopes of finding him who is life, and obtaining favour of the LORD (u)." Let us be much in prayer, self-examination, and meditation, and the like spiritual exercises: let us take heed that we are not shut up and inclosed in the world, be it with its honours, its riches, or its pleasures; these will hinder the communication, the free, profitable, pleasant communication between GOD and our souls; and what are all things here to be compared with fellowship with the Father, and with his Son JESUS CHRIST? Though we ought not to rest in ordinances, or means of grace, let us notwithstanding diligently attend upon them, and

(u) Prov. viii. 34, 35.

and come as with empty vessels to these channels, in hopes of finding them replenished with those "streams that make glad the city of our God, the tabernacles of the Most High (x)."

3. And lastly, When any of our relatives or friends come to their graves in a full age, and like a shock of corn in its season, how should this consideration reconcile us to their death, and soften our sorrows for their removal from us? When a shock of corn is carried home in its proper season, every one sees the right conduct of the proprietor. The corn is ripe, and therefore it is fit and proper that it should be housed. And when we see a saint, after he has been long useful and ornamental in life, dying in the LORD, and finishing his course with joy, who is there but must acknowledge the wise and gracious proceeding of the Great LORD of the harvest, in taking his servant to himself? Here is a soul fully prepared for heaven, a soul that has done its work on earth; and why should it stay to feel the further moulderings and pains of age, to drag on through still more years of labour and sorrow, till at last it is almost buried under the ruins of its clay? Why should it be immortalized, or why should its existence be prolonged to endure only more infirmities, and be more intimately and deeply acquainted with griefs and groans? Is not this the time, the time of full age, of hoary holiness,

(x) Psalm xlv. 4.

nets, when the heaven-born soul should return to its God, and enter into its Master's joy? When saints, having finished their work, are thus taken away, and life, and service, and self-enjoyment thus expire together, we see love in their removal, and may say in words a little different from our LORD, "If we love them, we shall rejoice when they go to the Father (y)." Their glory, their gain should abate the tide of our griefs, and reconcile us to that parting at which nature indeed mourns, but at which reason and religion command us to rejoice *.

An

(y) John xiv. 28.

* The substance of this Sermon was preached at different seasons, upon the deaths of two aged and worthy persons, Mr *John Rutt*, merchant in *Friday-street*, *London*, who died in *February*, 1757, and Mrs *Mary Beesly*, of *Pater-noster-row*, *London*, who died in *October*, 1761. Let the relations of the deceased bear with me, if I take the liberty, as an expression of my respect to the memory of two such excellent persons, and as an incentive to their descendants and others who may read these pages to copy after their amiable examples, of publishing from the press what I delivered from the pulpit in relation to their characters. As to Mr *John Rutt*, I gave this testimony of him at the conclusion of my Discourse: "How much was he like to good-corn, and how much like a shock of corn for the variety and maturity of his graces? How prepared did he appear to be for heaven? Of many professors of Christianity it may be truly said, that they scarce ever converse upon spiritual and heavenly subjects; on the contrary, our deceased brother sanctified his discourses with his friends with the things of God. His conversation was in heaven, and he appeared in a remarkable manner to be dead to this world, and to have his life hid with CHRIST in God. His traffic and commerce were above; and true, unaffected spirituality and devotion seemed so much to possess his heart, as to leave it almost without any impressions from the things of time and sense. Thus did he come to his grave



An H Y M N, suited to the
foregoing Sermon.

I.

HOW profitable is the corn
That more than millions feeds,
Tho' low it grows beneath the thorn,
And far outbrav'd by weeds?

II. Thus

"grave like a shock of corn in its season. And he came in a full
"age. His constitution was mouldered: decays and infirmities
"were come upon him. He had filled up the measure of life,
"and had attained to above seventy years; how kind therefore
"that he should be dismissed to glory; and that having been sa-
"tisfied with life, he should at length see the promised salvation!
"And how gentle and peaceful was his exit? The soft hands of
"angels seemed to untie the bands of animal life. Scarce a sigh
"or groan in his death: not a fear or doubt upon his soul, and
"hardly a pain to be perceived in his body; as if Heaven with
"its peaceful glories was meeting him, was descending upon him,
"in the very moments when his soul was leaving its clay, and en-
"tering into its eternal rest. *Blessed are the dead that die in*
"*the Lord.*"

As to Mrs Mary Beech, I gave the following testimony to her
character: "Has she not come to her grave like a shock of corn
"in its season, in that she appeared to be well prepared for death
"and heaven? She had feared the Lord from her youth, and
"had maintained her christian character with great reputation.
"Her holy conversation and her holy life shewed that she was
"ready for her in-gathering. She had endured long and excru-
"ciating pains in a becoming manner, had gone far beyond, even
"to

II.

Thus saints enrich this earthly ball,
 Tho' fools their worth despise,
 Distinguish'd by the LORD of all,
 And precious in his eyes.

III. The

"to near twenty years, her threescore years and ten; and why
 "should she not at length receive the end of her faith, the salva-
 "tion with eternal glory? Gentle was her discharge from life. I
 "saw her tolerably well on the *Thursday* (her servant when I came
 "in reading the Bible to her) and after having discoursed and
 "spent some time in prayer with her, we parted, I trust, like
 "Christians, both as to the spirituality and the cheerfulness of the
 "visit. *Friday* and *Saturday* I find had no great complaints in
 "them, at least not till the evening of *Saturday*, and on the *Lord's*-
 "day night she gently went away from time into eternity in her
 "sleep, and with none of the frequent agonies and pangs of dis-
 "solving nature."

Such was the account, at least in part, I gave at the conclusion of my Sermon of this aged saint, who had been early a member of the eminently great and good Mr *Howe's* church, and was a tree of righteousness, not unworthy the cultivation of that man of God. Upon the dissolution of that church she joined, now several years since, with that under my pastoral care, and continued to her death an honourable member among us; and in the family where she dwelt, not only held out an example of genuine, but also of the most amiable piety, and even the young could find pleasure in her company and conversation, so sweet a radiance shone out from amidst the decays of nature, and at the evening of her long, uncommonly long day! Soon after her decease I composed the following lines, and let my readers candidly peruse them, if not for any merit in the poetry, yet for the just delineation of her character; for let them be assured that flattery and groundless panegyric have had no share in either of the characters I have presented to their view.

III.

The seed that's buried in the earth,
Into new life shall bloom;
And saints shall feel a nobler birth,
Victorious o'er the tomb.

IV. By

IN the gay scene too oft of giddy youth,
She sought her GOD, and chose the paths of truth;
Those paths she trod to life's meridian stage,
Those paths pursu'd to long-extended age.
Much she endur'd, but from affliction's flame,
Like gold refulgent from the furnace came;
'Till in full age, and hoary piety,
And ripe for a removal to the sky,
Calm and unruff'd she resign'd her breath,
Lay down to sleep, and wak'd emerg'd from death;
Found the grim tyrant had perform'd his part,
Without one pang from his tremendous dart:
She blest'd the change, and stretch'd her joyful flight,
Convoy'd by angels to the realms of light;
Where safe arriv'd, her spirit now no more
Sighs to the blast, or hears the billows rore.
All, all is rest. Now face to face is seen
Her Father GOD, without a veil between;
And if one glimpse from him was heav'n below,
What bliss must from his endless vision flow!
Jesus, with all the scars of dying love,
Whence once he bled, and whence he pleads above,
Whom she with faith and joy on earth ador'd,
Her only Saviour and her only LORD,

Receives

IV.

By fun and show'r the fields around,
Revive, look green, and blow;
And with celestial influence crown'd,
Our souls divinely grow.

V.

The shocks of corn are rich with grain,
Compos'd of numerous ears;
And graces in a countless train
The fruitful christian bears.

VI. As

Receives her as his own: in her he sees
Another trophy of his victories;
And as a soul by him from ruin won
Presents her faultless at his Father's throne.

Thy long-expected heav'n, dear saint, is come:
No more an exile thou, but heir at home.
Imparadis'd in love, in love divine,
A bright eternity of joys is thine,
When shall I mount the skies, and feel these blessings mine?

REFLEXION.

PERHAPS some critic, or perhaps some friend,
May ask, "And what's the good these lines intend?"
Live o'er her life, and such shall be thine end.

VI.

As sheaves in full-grown treasures wait,
Till to the stack they rise;
So ripe for Heav'n's all-perfect state,
Should saints ascend the skies.

VII.

Grant me, O LORD, when death shall come,
An unclouded mind!
And while I sink into the tomb,
Let glory shine behind.

VIII.

O crown that day with peace and light;
When earth its own receives!
A summer's day, serene and bright,
That crowds the barn with sheaves!



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VI

As threes in full grown meadows wait,
Till to the flock they take,
So ripe for harvest's all the grain,
Should angels stand the price.

VII

Grant me, O Lord, when death shall come,
An unobscured mind!
And while I sink into the tomb,
Let glory shine behind.

VIII

O crown that day with peace and light,
When earth its own receives!
A future day, serene and bright,
That crowns the dawn with threes!

28 SEP 60

SERMON



S E R M O N XV.

The Nature and Excellencies of Divine Wisdom.



JAMES III. 17.

But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy, and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

WHAT admirable descriptions and directions do we find in the divine word to inspire and promote in our minds and lives the spirit and practice of holiness! Among the number the chapter before us presents us with some very excellent precepts, and a most beautiful delineation of true religion, under the character of that wisdom that comes from above. "Who is a wise man (says the apostle, *ver.* 13.)

C c

" and

“ and endued with knowledge among you?
“ Let him shew out of a good conversation his
“ works with meekness of wisdom.” Man-
kind, as if the apostle had said, have an ambi-
tion to be accounted wise, and you may have
the emulation to excel in it among others. I
shall not aim to extinguish or repress its flame;
but allow me, as you may be in danger of a mis-
take about the nature of true wisdom, and may
take up with the shadow instead of the sub-
stance, to point out to you where wisdom lies,
or in what it consists. Let such a man who
would cast the glories of wisdom over his cha-
racter, and give the brightest display of it,
“ shew out of a good conversation,” out of a
conversation in all respects holy and useful,
“ his works,” his works of undissembled piety
towards GOD, and of substantial benefit to his
fellow-creatures, and especially his fellow-
Christians, “ with meekness of wisdom;” shew
them not with vain ostentation, or a furious
party-zeal, but with all that meekness which
true wisdom dictates and approves. “ But if
“ ye have bitter envying and strife (*ver.* 14.) in
“ your hearts, glory not, and lie not against
“ the truth.” But if, on the other hand, ye
entertain and indulge “ bitter envying and con-
“ tention” in your hearts, “ glory not,” as
being the children and possessors of true wisdom,
and “ lie not against the truth,” by pretending
that you are truly wise, when your own evil
malignant spirits are a glaring contradiction to
all

all such professions. "This wisdom (*ver.* 15.) "descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." This wisdom, falsely so called, and in reality more worthy of the name of madness than of that wisdom that descends from above, is not the pure and vital ray of heaven, but it is the dreadful and destructive fire of hell, and may justly be branded as "earthly, sensual, and devilish;" it proceeds from an excess, an inordinacy of earthly and sensual propensions, and is the very characteristic and image of Satan himself, the foulest and worst of beings. "For where (*ver.* 16.) envying and strife are, there are confusion, and "every evil work." For where envy and strife reign in the heart, and break forth in the conversation in malignant and rancorous speeches against others, there of course will be confusion, the wildest tumult and uproar both in a man's own soul, and in the souls of others upon whom the tempest of his furious and turbulent passion falls, and then may be expected every other evil work, and the fierce and uncontroll'd power of all that iniquity which is forbidden by God, and which is injurious to men. "But the wisdom," and so come in the words of our text, "that comes from "above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, "and easy to be intreated, full of mercy, and "good fruits, without partiality, and without "hypocrisy." I shall,

I. Shew you wherein this wisdom of which our text speaks consists, or what are its nature and excellencies.

II. I shall consider upon what grounds it may be intitled to the name of wisdom. And,

III. And lastly, I shall trace the origin of this wisdom, and shew you that it comes from above.

I. I shall shew you wherein this wisdom of which our text speaks consists, or what are its nature and excellencies. It is said to be "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy, and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

(1.) It is said to be first pure. Its nature is not unholy, or that in any way violates that plan of truth and sanctity laid down in the divine oracles; but on the contrary, it is constituted of a steady and uniform regard to the truths of the gospel, and the purity recommended and urged in its precepts. It is a wisdom whose first essential property, whose most striking and noblest feature, is purity; purity in opposition to all corrupt mixture, purity in opposition to all error, and purity in opposition to all wickedness, and particularly the mazes of hypocrisy and deceit. This wisdom brings down

down the glories of heaven in its clearness; and untainted snow and immaculate sun-beams are but faint emblems of its purity and perfection.

(2.) The wisdom that comes from above is peaceable. "It is first pure, then peaceable." It is not of a noisy, outrageous, and ungovernable temper: on the other hand, it teaches the passions to subside, and know their appointed bounds. It cries, Peace, be still, when it enters the soul, and immediately there is a calm. So far as is consistent with truth and holiness, or as they will give leave, it studies and pursues the things that make for peace. Peace is its dear delight: it will make many a sacrifice for peace in the denial of itself, and in bearing injuries unprovoked and unrevengeed from others, though it will by no means give up the great interests of integrity and holiness to obtain or enjoy the pleasures of peace with men, it being first "pure," and then, in an holy and unalterable regard to that purity, and not otherwise, "peaceable." The wisdom that comes from above, is not of a warlike and turbulent spirit: it partakes of the nature of that world of peace which gave it birth. It comes not grasping the standard, and brandishing the weapons of war; it seeks not the victor's laurel, which grows from the field of slaughter and blood; but it comes with the smiles, with the sunshine, with the olive-branches of peace, and first hushes the soul to peace upon which it descends, and then

then excites it to promote and diffuse peace among others.

(3.) The wisdom that comes from above is gentle. It is of a soft and mild disposition. Its nature is not of the lion or the vulture, but that of the lamb and the dove. Its treatment of others is not harsh and imperious, but soft and courteous; and not only does this wisdom "in meekness instruct those who oppose themselves (*a*)," not only does it "in meekness restore a brother that is fallen (*b*)," but in meekness it bears the affronts and injuries of others, taking pattern from the great Teacher and the great Example of wisdom, "who when he was reviled, reviled not again; who when he suffered, threatened not, but committed himself to him who judges righteously (*c*)."
We may find this wisdom described under another name by another apostle, but undoubtedly it is the same daughter of heaven: "Charity suffers long and is kind; charity envies not; charity vaunts not herself; is not puffed up; doth not behave unseemly; seeks not her own; is not easily provoked; thinks no evil (*d*)."

(4.) The wisdom that comes from above is "easy to be intreated." If injuries and wrongs have provoked it to disgust and resentment, it will easily be persuaded to drop the disgust, and dismiss the resentment. Its nature is not that of

(*a*) 2 Tim. ii. 25.

(*b*) Gal. v. 1.

(*c*) 2 Pet. ii. 23.

(*d*) 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5.

of the unrelenting iron or steel, but it is on the other hand, pliable and flexible; so far is it from collecting itself into such an unconquerable hardness, that it will rather break than bend, that it melts like the snow or wax before the sun into forgiveness and love. Shall we hear the account which a very worthy writer has given us of this ingredient of heavenly wisdom, that it is "easy to be intreated." 'This is that grace, says he, by which a person cordially receives the admonitions of another; and being taught a better course by wise and good men, both easily yields up his own former sentiments, and relinquishes that purpose which would have led him from his duty. This grace in doubtful matters easily believes what is best, and finds no difficulty in forgiving injuries. Against this grace they offend who are implacable, who think too highly of themselves, who are obstinate in what is evil, inflexible in their resolutions, and wholly under the dominion of their own wills *.

(5.) The wisdom that comes from above is full of mercy. It is of a kind and compassionate

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* *Est hæc virtus quâ quis aliorum monita lubenter admittit, & à viris bonis & sapientibus meliora edoctus facile & sententia suâ cedit & à malo quovis proposito dimovetur; & in rebus ambiguis id facile credit quod optimum est; & injurias sibi illatos non agrè condonat. — In hanc virtutem peccant qui sunt implacabiles, & arroganter de se sentientes, pertinaces in malo, tenaces propositi, & voluntati suæ prorsus obsequentes. Gatakerus in Locum.*

disposition, that pities the indigent and afflicted, and communicates of the plenties of its table, and the overflowings of its cup for the support and comfort of others. This wisdom that comes from above is so far from shutting and sealing up the mind in an unfeeling selfishness, and disregard to the distresses that are every where presenting themselves in our world, that on the contrary it sympathizes with them, and makes the calamities of others in a manner its own, considering itself as a member of the great body of mankind that ought to bear its part in the sorrows of its fellow-members. It devises liberal things, and is tender-hearted and compassionate; nay more, it is full of mercy, not only kind, but full of kindness, like a fountain that is never to be exhausted, but as soon as it has sent forth one stream, is ready to pour forth another: mercy flows upon mercy, and grace upon grace. "This wisdom teaches us, "as the elect of God, holy and beloved, to "put on bowels of mercies (e)." Not a want nor wo is there but what this wisdom from above commiserates, and would relieve and remove if it was in its power. It is so far from creating miseries, that it would fain diminish and reduce them; and "like the Sun of righteousness," whence it descends, it rises upon the world "with healing under its wings (f)."

(6.) This wisdom that comes from above is not only full of mercy, but of good fruits.

"Full

(e) Col. iii. 12.

(f) Mal. iv. 2.

“ Full of mercy,” says the apostle, “ and of
“ good fruits.” Full of mercy may more properly regard the sentiments and sensations of the soul, and full of good fruits may refer to the beneficent and useful actions, which, as good fruits, spring from this merciful disposition and propension of spirit. As the wisdom that comes from above is full of mercy in its temper, so it is full of good fruits in its conduct. This wisdom is not empty and barren, a tree hung only with fair and beautiful leaves, but it brings forth fruit acceptable to GOD, and profitable to men. That generosity, if such it may be called, that is composed of fine words and good wishes, is no more to be compared to that mercy which this heavenly wisdom feels, and feeling communicates, than a painted flame is to be compared to a living fire. “ This wisdom will not say to a brother or a sister that
“ is naked, and destitute of daily food, Depart
“ in peace, be thou warmed and filled, and at
“ the same time give them not those things
“ which are needful to the body (g);” but it opens the heart and the hand in liberality, and really and actually relieves, according to its abilities, the necessities of others. It clothes the naked, feeds the hungry, visits the sick and afflicted, and imparts of its plenties to the wants of others; nay sometimes of its necessities, in some degree, to relieve a neighbour’s extremity. “ It casts its bread upon the waters,”
in

(g) James ii. 15, 16.

in faith upon the divine promise, "that it shall
 " find it after many days," if not in the days
 of earth, yet in the days of heaven. "It gives
 " a portion to seven, and also to eight; as it
 " knows not what evil shall be upon the
 " earth (b)." This wisdom delights to do
 good. It is so far from shunning, that it seeks
 out and embraces the opportunities of being
 useful, and sheds, like a grove of spices, its
 sweet perfumes to all that come near it. See a
 glorious example of this sort in good *Job*, who
 could say of himself, no doubt with the exactest
 truth; "If I did despise the cause of my man-
 " servant, or my maid-servant, when they
 " contended with me, what shall I do when
 " God rises up; and when he visits, what
 " shall I answer him? Did not he that made
 " me in the womb, make him? and did not
 " one fashion us in the womb? If I have with-
 " held the poor from his desire, or have caused
 " the eyes of the widow to fail? Or have eaten
 " my morsel alone, and the fatherless hath not
 " eaten thereof? For from my youth he was
 " brought up with me as a father, and I have
 " guided her (the widow) from my mother's
 " womb: if I have seen any perish for want of
 " clothing, or any poor without covering, if
 " his loins have not blessed me, and if he were
 " not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; if
 " I have lifted up my hand against the father-
 " less, when I saw my help in the gate; then
 " let

(b) Eccles. xi. 1, 2.

“ let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade,
 “ and mine arm be broken from the bone (i).”
 And again, “ When the ear heard me, then it
 “ blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it
 “ gave witness to me: because I delivered the
 “ poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him
 “ that had none to help him. The blessing of
 “ him that was ready to perish came upon me,
 “ and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for
 “ joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed
 “ me; my judgment was as a robe and a dia-
 “ dem: I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I
 “ to the lame; I was a father to the poor, and
 “ the cause that I knew not I searched out:
 “ and I brake the jaws of the wicked, and
 “ pluckt the spoil out of his teeth (k).”

(7.) This wisdom that comes from above is
 “ without partiality.” It is a wisdom that does
 not distinguish men according to the flesh *.
 It has not respect of persons, so as to honour
 the rich and despise the poor; a crime that the
 apostle rebukes in the foregoing chapter: it is
 a wisdom that, under the regulations of pru-
 dence, as far as its sphere can extend, and its
 abilities will admit, diffuses itself to all without
 limitation or restriction: it will not only do
 good to a relative, but to an alien; not only to
 a friend, but to a stranger; and not only to a
 stranger, but to an enemy. “ It has been
 “ taught,

(i) Job xxxi. 13—22.

(k) Job xxix. 11—17.

* *Adiáκριστον non judicans, quæ non discernit homines secundum carnem.* Grotius.

“taught,” and what it has been taught it will readily perform, “to love its enemies, to bless them that curse it, to do good to them that hate it, and pray for them that despitefully use it, and persecute it; that it may thus approve itself to be the child of its Father who is in heaven, who makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust (l).” Not only will this wisdom shew kindness where it can have a prospect of returns, but where it can look for no other reward but the pleasure of doing good, according to what is commanded by our blessed LORD, “that when we make a feast, we are to call the poor, the maimed, the lame and blind, who cannot recompense us (m).” Nay, this wisdom will not only do good where it has no prospect of returns, that is, of gratitude and respect, but it will persevere to do good, even notwithstanding it meets with base requitals of malevolence and affront: still it will shine on, and direct its rays even against the clouds, the vapours that are sent up to obstruct and cloud its beams. It is like the sun in the heavens, that has a smile to bestow upon all that behold it, and without the exception of a single person, be he good or bad, grateful or ungrateful, diffuses abroad its blessings. To return evil for good, it knows is like the devil; to return evil for evil, it knows is to copy after the beast; to return good for

(l) Matt. v. 44, 45.

(m) Luke xiv. 13, 14.

for good, it knows is like the man; but to to return good for evil, this it knows is the character of GOD and CHRIST; and this example therefore it is ambitious to imitate.

(8.) And lastly; The wisdom that comes from above is without hypocrisy. Agreeable to what it thinks, it speaks; and agreeable to what it speaks, it acts to the utmost of its power. The heart, the lip, and the life are quite uniform and harmonious: not selfish ends, not carnal interests, but a sincere undissembled regard to the glory of GOD, and the good of others, is the life and soul of that wisdom that comes from above. "For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness, GOD is witness; nor of men sought we glory (n). For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of GOD, we have had our conversion in the world (o)." The love that inspires this wisdom is "without dissimulation (p)." What this wisdom appears to be, that it really is. It will abide the strictest search, and the most rigid test. Put it into the furnace as often you will, as it is gold, gold it will be found. Masks and labyrinths, vain shows, and barren blazes, are ever abhorred by it. It shines in its own native light, and

(n) 1 Theff. ii. 5, 6.

(o) 2 Cor. i. 12.

(p) Rom. xii. 9.

and neither needs nor asks any other embellishment. The more you examine this wisdom, the more you will find it to be what it seems; and it uses no other veil than that of its own modesty and humility, which is so far from diminishing, that it gives a loveliness to its lustre. This wisdom knows no blush, but when its merits are too much proclaimed and published abroad, for it seeks not the honour of men, but the glory of God, and delights not in the sounding trumpet among mortals, but in the home-felt satisfaction of conscience, and looks not for its reward here, but hereafter, at that tribunal where the secrets of all hearts, and the actions of all lives, shall be made manifest. Its benevolence and "alms" are gone up for a memorial before God (*q*); and it looks for nothing more, nothing better than "that he that sees in secret should one day reward it openly (*r*). And thus have I shewn you wherein this wisdom of which our text speaks consists, or what are its nature and excellencies. I proceed,

II. To consider upon what grounds it may be intitled to the name of wisdom. "The wisdom," says the apostle, "that comes from above." It is worthy of our observation, that true religion, or real holiness, is in scripture stiled wisdom, and particularly in the book of the Proverbs. And why may not religion

or

(*q*) Acts x. 4.

(*r*) Matt. vi. 4.

or holiness, with the greatest propriety and justice, be thus denominated, since as the end of every reasonable Being is its happiness, so religion or holiness is the surest, and indeed the only way to that end? And this will be evident, if we consider that religion or holiness is the likeness to God, that it is conducive to our present comfort, and that it will in the end be crowned with eternal glory and blessedness.

(1.) True religion or holiness is the likeness to God. God is the greatest, the best, the happiest of beings. None are to be compared to him for the majesty of his power, for the purity of his nature, or for the amplitude of his felicity. Consequently to be like to God is to be, though in a lower degree, not indeed great as he is great, but good as he is good, and happy as he is happy. Now this likeness we in part attain when we attain to holiness, or when we are pure as he is pure, when we are peaceable as he is peaceable, when we are gentle as he is gentle, when we are placable as he is placable, when we are inclined to goodness as he is inclined to goodness, when we are full of kind actions as he is full of kind actions, when we are diffusively beneficent as he is diffusively beneficent, and when we are sincere and upright as he is just in all his ways, and holy in all his words and works. Surely that must be wisdom that assimilates me to the original of all perfection, to him who is the uncreated and

and inexhaustible fountain and possessor of all that is good and excellent! How can I possibly do otherwise than consult my happiness, when I aim to be like the self-originated and indefectible source of happiness, though I can be no more like him as to degree, than the drop to the ocean, or the glimmering spark to the mid-day sun? That he is happy who is like God, and that he is miserable who is unlike him, may well pass for axioms or propositions that prove their truth by their own declaration. "Man was created in the image of God (s)." And our restoration lies in "a renewal in knowledge, after the image of him that created us (t)." And we are changed into the same "image from glory to glory (u)." And what is the intention of all this but our happiness? For what health is to the body, that is holiness to the soul; and for a person to imagine salvation without holiness is much as good sense as to talk of being saved without salvation. Be ye holy as I am holy, is the same meaning as be ye happy for I am happy. When the perfections of God, his holiness, goodness, truth, &c. are copied out upon our natures, and the same SPIRIT is in us which was also in CHRIST JESUS, then have we a true communion with God by a conformity of nature; and must not those souls be happy that are like God, and are become one with him?

(2.) True

(s) Gen. i. 27.

(t) Col. iii. 10.

(u) 2 Cor. iii. 18.

(2.) True religion or real holiness must be wisdom in that it conduces so much to our comfort in this world. Is wisdom that excellency which enables and qualifies a man to distinguish, choose, and pursue his true interest by the aptest means and methods? then holiness must be wisdom, as it respects a man's existence in this world, and his passage through the present state. Examine the constituents of holiness as they are here described: "The wisdom that comes from above is pure." Now who will say that impurity or iniquity is the way to make a man happy even in this world? What engenders grief? What breeds the gnawing worm of conscience? What makes a man a terror to himself? What multiplies and heaps distresses upon him? What does all this but sin? Do you not see that many a sin has, as it were, a misery, a sore and dreadful misery of its own enchain'd with it? or if you please so to compare it, a viper springing out of its own bowels? Thus what a loathsome disease follows upon uncleanness? What poverty upon pride? What anxiety upon covetousness? "Who hath wo? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes?" Not the sober and temperate, "but they that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixt wine (x)." And in like manner how soon are the votaries of idleness distinguished with its livery? And is

D d

not

(x) Prov. xxiii. 29, 30.

not the observation of the wise man verified from age to age, "that drowfiness shall clothe
" a man with rags (y)?"

The like remarks might be made upon other sins, and their natural consequences. Sin, my friends, is a bitter root, and produces bitter fruit. "The way of transgressors is hard (z).
" There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto
" the wicked (a). Thine own wickedness shall
" correct thee, and thy backslidings shall re-
" prove thee: know therefore and see that
" it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast
" forsaken the LORD thy GOD, and that
" my fear is not in thee, saith the LORD of
" Hosts (b)."

Again, the wisdom that comes from above
" is peaceable." Now let any one judge whether peaceableness or unpeaceableness conduces most to a man's comfort? Can there be happiness amidst rage and strife? Is happiness born and bred in whirlwinds and storms? or is it not the offspring of calms and quiet? Is that man likely to be most easy in his travels through life, who quarrels with every one in his way, who never learnt to put up an offence, nor heeded how he gave one; or that man who is at peace with all his fellow-pilgrims, and is both ready to forgive an injury, and watchful how he offers one? If I disturb others, shall I not disturb myself? If I can lightly throw
abroad

(y) Prov. xxiii. 21.

(z) Prov. xiii. 15.

(a) Isa. xlviii. 22.

(b) Jer. ii. 19.

abroad firebrands, arrows, and death, may I not expect that they will be flung back upon myself? For this kind of justice, how much soever the better species of it are neglected, is generally observed with great punctuality and exactness. Again, the wisdom that comes from above "is gentle." Now will any be so foolish as to think that happiness dwells with the rough and fierce? "Where envying and strife are, are there not confusion, and every evil work?" If *Isbmael's* hand is against every man, will not every man's hand be against him? Further, the wisdom that comes from above "is easy to be intreated." I beseech you, what is the happiness of an unconquerable enmity, and implacability of temper? What are the sweets of rage and malice, and gloomy resentment, but the sweets, if such they may be called, of only a drop of honey with a tormenting agonizing sting? These passions are the sores and ulcers of the soul, and not its true rest and enjoyment. Again, the wisdom that comes from above "is full of mercy, and of good fruits." Now does he take the direct road to his real comfort, who shuts up the bowels of pity, who never sympathizes with want and misery, and who never relieves and assists them? By no means. Such a sordid soul has not so much as the idea, and much less the experience of the sublime, godlike pleasure of doing good: and though the miser may delight himself with heaping up riches, yet he tastes

but a very poor pleasure; for what has he more, as the wise man speaks, "than the beholding them with his eyes (c)?" What cares and fears mingle along with their possession; and what a gloomy reflexion haunts his mind, that he must soon die and leave them, leave them for a long *For ever*? Add again, that the wisdom that comes from above "is without partiality." What joys does he deny himself, who, like a whirlpool, swallows his own streams, and never communicates, but as it were by accident, or for some selfish end, any relief, any refreshment to others? What pleasures are there in an expanded open benevolence? the pleasures that we give to others roll back in a full tide upon ourselves; but where is the delight in lying wrapt up in self-love, and shooting out, it may be, a sharp prickle, an harsh and angry speech, against all that would awake us into a right temper, and restore us to a right posture of soul? Once more, the wisdom that comes from above "is without hypocrisy." Now what does the hypocrite gain by his hypocrisy? His heart reproaches him that he is not what he appears to be. He dreads to have his mask struck off, and his shame exposed; but the truly holy soul walks in no disguise, but is satisfied from itself. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways, but a good man shall be satisfied from himself (d)."

Search

(c) Eccles. v. 11.

(d) Prov. xiv. 14.

Search then over these excellencies of divine wisdom, and see whether they do not all, as so many lines, meet in one centre, our happiness, our happiness as to this world, as we shall presently see they do as to the other; "for godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come (e)." Accordingly I add,

(3.) And lastly, That true religion or real holiness may be stiled wisdom, as it will in the end be crowned with eternal glory and blessedness. The ways of holiness are not only "ways of pleasantness, and its paths peace (f)," but they are the direct and only road to eternal life and glory: they are the "ways everlasting (g)," the ways that lead to everlasting happiness. From what regions does sin, with its numerous progeny of contention, fury, malice, unmercifulness, emptiness as to good fruits, superfluity as to bad ones, fordid selfishness, and base hypocrisy; from what regions, I say, does sin with all this wretched and horrible train arise, or to what regions is it adapted, what world will receive it as its own at last? I need not inform you, since you have been already informed, that this wisdom, or more truly this madness, is "earthly, sensual, devilish," that it comes from beneath, and that as it sprung from hell, so it is doomed to eternal punishment there. "Now the works of the flesh," says the apostle,

D d 3

"are

(e) 1 Tim. iv. 8.

(f) Prov. iii. 17.

(g) Psalm cxxxix. 24.

“ are manifest, which are these ; adultery, for-
 “ nication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry,
 “ witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations,
 “ wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings,
 “ murders, drunkenness, and such like ; of
 “ which I tell you before, as I have told you
 “ in time past, that they which do such things
 “ shall not inherit the kingdom of God (g).”

And these and the like iniquities are by the same divine word as surely consigned over to the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, as they are thus excluded from the regions of glory and happiness. Such is the case as to the wisdom from beneath. But the wisdom that comes from above, that wears the lustre of purity, the rainbow of peace, the smiles of gentleness and forgiveness, and whose hands are enriched with the fruits of mercy, as its heart is full of its seeds in ten thousand benevolent, impartial, disinterested, and sincere intentions; this wisdom, I say, as it is of celestial origin, so it will lead the soul to that blessed world whence it came. It descended from heaven, and to heaven it shall return. Not that our most amiable graces, with their benign and glorious effects, will satisfy the divine justice, or make atonement for our past iniquities, or procure for us by any merit of theirs, the favour of God, and a mansion in his kingdom; but these graces will as certainly be crowned in the end with the heavenly happiness, as if they could give us a title to such

(g) Gal. v. 19—21.

such an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory. GOD has so determined it, that none but holy souls shall be admitted into his temple above, and that not one soul adorned with its beauties shall be excluded the inheritance among the saints in light. By these graces, wrought in our hearts by the power and love of our GOD, we are made meet for heaven, we are adapted to that holy country, and are qualified to relish and enjoy its divine felicity. Every renewed soul is a soul pardoned, and a soul that will be eternally glorified. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see GOD (*b*)."

And our LORD declares, that "his sheep hear his voice; that he knows them, and that they follow him; and that they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand (*i*)."

Thus have I shewn you upon what grounds true religion or real holiness may be stiled wisdom: it clothes the soul with the divine image; it pours out blessing for us in the present life; and it is the sure road to eternal happiness in the world to come. Let me conclude this head with the beautiful, and, at the same time, just description which the scripture gives of the excellencies and advantages of this wisdom that comes from above.

"Happy is the man that finds wisdom, and the man that gets understanding: for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than

D d 4

" fine

(b) Matt. v. 8.*(i)* John x. 27, 28.

“ fine gold. She is more precious than rubies;
“ and all the things thou canst desire are not
“ to be compared to her. Length of days is
“ in her right-hand, and in her left-hand
“ riches and honour. Her ways are ways of
“ pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.
“ She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on
“ her, and happy is every one that retains
“ her (*k*).” And again, “ Get wisdom, get
“ understanding : forget it not, neither de-
“ cline from the words of my mouth. Forsake
“ her not, and she shall preserve thee : love
“ her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is
“ the principal thing, therefore get wisdom,
“ and with all thy getting get understanding.
“ Exalt her, and she shall promote thee : she
“ shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost
“ embrace her. She shall give to thine head
“ an ornament of grace; a crown of glory shall
“ she deliver to thee. Hear, O my son, and
“ receive my sayings, and the years of thy life
“ shall be many. I have taught thee in the
“ way of wisdom : I have led thee in right
“ paths. When thou goest, thy steps shall
“ not be straitened, and when thou runnest
“ thou shalt not stumble. Take fast hold of
“ instruction, let her not go, she is thy life (*l*).”
To the same purpose, “ Riches and honours
“ are with me ;” (the voice of wisdom) “ yea,
“ durable riches and righteousness. My fruit
“ is better than gold ; and my revenue than
“ choice

(*k*) Prov. iii. 13—18.

(*l*) Prov. iv. 5—13.

“ choice silver. I lead in the way of righte-
“ ousness, in the midst of the paths of judg-
“ ment, that I may cause those that love me
“ to inherit substance, and I will fill their
“ treasures. Now therefore hearken unto me,
“ O ye children; for blessed are they that keep
“ my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise,
“ and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that
“ hears me, watching daily at my gates, wait-
“ ing at the posts of my doors; for whoso finds
“ me, finds life, and shall obtain favour of
“ the LORD: but he that sins against me,
“ wrongs his own soul; all they that hate me
“ love death (*m*).” Holiness and wisdom are
the same under different names; sin and folly
are the same under different names. The ho-
liest creature is the wisest creature; and I dare
pronounce the devil, who is supreme in wicked-
ness, supreme in folly, and that notwithstand-
ing all his great intellects and abilities, he is the
greatest fool, because he is the greatest offender
in the universe. I proceed,

III. And lastly, To trace the origin of this
wisdom, and shew you that it comes from
above. “ But the wisdom from above,” says
our text, or that wisdom that descends from
above, in opposition to that wisdom that de-
scends not from above, mentioned *ver.* 15.
This wisdom, this true religion, this real holi-
ness, wherever it is found, comes from above.

It

(*m*) Prov. viii. 18—21, 32—36.

It is of heavenly extraction, a very contrary product to such as springs from the shades beneath, and a much better product than what earth can yield in the fairest nurseries and groves of philosophic speculation and science. This wisdom is the gift of GOD: he sows the divine principle in our hearts, he waters it with the dews from the everlasting hills, and he supports and nourishes it by his benign and gracious smiles and influences. If from true evangelical motives, from the roots of faith and love, a willing and cordial dedication of ourselves to GOD and CHRIST, a fervent desire and delight to shew forth their praise, and gratefully express our obedience to them, we are pure in heart and life, we are peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy, we are not to ascribe this blessed experience to ourselves, or think that this wisdom is the natural product and the self-grown excellency of our own hearts; but on the other hand, we are to acknowledge, with the most sincere and lively devotion and gratitude of our souls, that by the grace of GOD we are what we are, and that it is the Almighty and Good SPIRIT of our GOD that has purged us from our thorns and briars, that has broken up our fallow ground, that has implanted in us the principles of holiness, that has given them to bud, to blossom, and bring forth their fruits, and has turned our wilderness into a fruitful field,

field, and our desert into the garden of the LORD. Whatever means, whatever instructions we have enjoyed from others, yet we are to look beyond them, and to own that it is GOD that has "given us in the hidden part to
 " know wisdom (*n*). He creates in us clean
 " hearts, he renews within us right spirits (*o*).
 " We are regenerated (*p*) and sanctified (*q*) by
 " his SPIRIT. We are his workmanship, created
 " in CHRIST JESUS unto good works, which
 " he hath before ordained that we should walk
 " therein (*r*). The fruit of the SPIRIT is
 " love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness,
 " goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (*s*).
 " Not till the SPIRIT is poured upon us from
 " on high does the wilderness become a fruit-
 " ful field (*t*):" but when this blessing is vouch-
 " safed, " then instead of the thorn shall come
 " up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar shall
 " come up the myrtle-tree; and they shall be
 " to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting
 " sign that shall not be cut off (*u*)." In a
 word, " this wisdom, as does every good and
 " perfect gift, comes from above from the Fa-
 " ther of lights, with whom is no variableness,
 " neither shadow of turning (*x*)." Ever let
 us consider this wisdom as kindled in our souls
 by GOD himself; and while we walk in the
 light,

(*n*) Psal. li. 6.(*p*) John iii. 6.(*r*) Ephes. ii. 10.(*t*) Isai. xxxii. 15.(*x*) James i. 17.(*o*) Psal. li. 10.(*q*) 1 Cor. vi. 11.(*s*) Gal. v. 22, 23.(*u*) Isai. lv. 13.

light, and ourselves and others enjoy the light, let us remember that we are made light in the LORD, and render him our sincere and affectionate praise, both for the justification of ourselves by the redemption which is in CHRIST JESUS, and for the renewal of our natures by the influences of the HOLY SPIRIT. "Elect," says the apostle *Peter*, "according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the SPIRIT unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of JESUS (y). For who hath first given unto him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen (z)."

Having finished the consideration of the several heads I proposed, I shall now endeavour to improve and apply our subject. And,

1. Let us seriously inquire whether we have this wisdom that comes from above. Are we pure and unblameable in all manner of holy conversation and conduct? Have our hearts known what it is to be purged from their iniquities, and to be possessed of the inwrought beauties of holiness? Are we of a peaceable, gentle, forgiving disposition? and instead of being the incendiaries of the world, are we the true disciples of the meek and merciful JESUS? Are we, without partiality and without hypocrisy, full of mercy and of good fruits? and is there

(y) 1 Pet. i. 2.

(z) Rom. xi. 35, 36.

there no one day, nor waking hour that passes over us, without some new efforts or new designs to glorify our heavenly Father, by doing justly, or loving mercy, or walking humbly before him? How solicitous should we be that we may have this wisdom that comes from above! Its own nature is most amiable and excellent, and it affords a manifest proof that we are in a state of pardon and acceptance with God, and are in the sure road to eternal glory. In the light of sanctification we may read our justification, and title to heaven: holiness, this wisdom from above, is the seal of God upon us that we are his people, as a person's mark distinguishes his sheep, though his money only purchased them. "There is no condemnation " to them which are in CHRIST JESUS, who " walk not after the flesh, but after the " SPIRIT (a)."

2. Let us earnestly pray for this wisdom that comes from above. "If any of you," says our apostle, who hath thus unfolded before us the excellencies of this wisdom from above, "lack " wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to " all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it " shall be given him (b)." And again, the wise man says; "If thou incline thine ear " unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding:

(a) Rom. viii. 1.

(b) James i. 5.

“standing: if thou seekest her as silver, and
 “searchest for her as for hid treasures; then
 “shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD,
 “and find the knowledge of thy GOD: for the
 “LORD gives wisdom, out of his mouth come
 “knowledge and understanding (c).” Amidst
 this encouragement from the mouth of GOD
 himself, let us earnestly pray to him for the
 gift of this heavenly wisdom. He that said in
 the creation of the natural world, when the
 earth was without form and void, and dark-
 ness lay upon the face of the deep, “Let there
 be light, and there was light,” can as easily shine
 into our hearts to give us the light of the know-
 ledge of himself in the face of JESUS CHRIST,
 and for every other holy and happy purpose.
 Nothing is too hard for our GOD to perform:
 folly at his command shall be transformed into
 wisdom; and madness, outrageous and turbu-
 lent, shall be restored to its right mind, and sit,
 meek and peaceable, at the feet of JESUS. Let
 us then most fervently beseech our GOD that
 he would make us wise unto salvation; and
 that with all our getting we may get that un-
 derstanding, whose lustres shall direct and com-
 fort our way to the celestial glory. “Then
 “shall we know, if we follow on to know the
 “LORD: his going forth is prepared as the
 “morning: and he shall come unto us as the
 “rain; as the latter and former rain upon the
 “earth (d).”

3. Let

(c) Prov. ii. 2—6.

(d) Hof. vi. 3.

3. Let us not only pray for this wisdom for ourselves but for all mankind. Let us not only be ardently desirous that our fleece may be wet with the dews of heaven, but let us be importunate with God for a rich and copious effusion of it upon all the nations and inhabitants of our miserable world. How would the wilderness and solitary places (I mean not as to people, but as to piety) rejoice and blossom as the rose under the overspreading influences of this wisdom that comes from above? Though it found the earth a desert before it, yet it would leave an *Eden*, a garden of the Lord behind it. What wars do the lusts that war in our members produce among the children of men? and what harmless creatures have lions, wolves, and serpents, as to the destruction of our race, been found, in comparison of the tyrants and oppressors of the earth from among ourselves, who have waded through rivers of blood to empire, and wantonly butchered thousands and ten thousands to gratify the lust of ambition, or to glut their horrible revenge? But all these infernal flames, that like a mighty conflagration, have spread through our world in horror and destruction, would be immediately quenched by the plentiful and universal effusion of this wisdom that comes from above. Shall we not then, one and all, earnestly implore the Father of Lights and the Father of Mercies to pour forth this wisdom, so salutary and productive of such benign effects, upon
cur

our guilty wretched globe? As friends of mankind, let us pray for the best of blessings to be shed down upon them. "For *Zion's* sake let us not hold our peace, and for *Jerusalem's* sake let us not rest, till the righteousness thereof goes forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns (e). Father, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven (f). Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field: and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever (g). Mercy and truth shall meet together; righteousness and peace shall kiss each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth (h)" when this wisdom shall look down, shall descend from heaven. I only add,

4. And lastly, What a blessed world must heaven be, where this wisdom for ever dwells in its original fulness, its God and Father, and where it communicates itself to all in the most copious and delightful emanations! If its beams here on earth, its fainter and weaker beams, produce such comfort and happiness, what a blessed world must that be, where wisdom is enthroned in its uncreated peerless glories, and shines upon, and possesses every soul in a full unclouded radiation? Christianity is the religion

(e) *Isai.* lxii. 1.(f) *Matt.* vi. 10.(g) *Isai.* xxxii. 16, 17.(h) *Psal.* lxxxv. 10, 11.

gion of the realms above, christianity not in form, not in languor, not in imperfection, but in its absolute and total excellency and dominion. How should we then long for that better world, especially as we shall be so much better for our translation thither, not only as to our society, but as to ourselves; “for that which “is perfect shall then be come, and that which “is in part shall be done away (*i*); and we “shall be presented faultless before the presence “of the divine glory with exceeding joy (*k*).”

Let us then aspire after heaven, look for it, and look to it as the country of our peace, and perfection in holiness and happiness. Wisdom there, whose glance we now feel upon our souls but like the light of a distant sun, shall be enjoyed in its full effulgence, and in the rich communication of its unsullied glories. What life, what inexpressible and inconceivable delight shall fill our souls! Our own happy experience shall then convince us, that no high hyperbole, but a plain simple truth is contained in that declaration of the psalmist, when speaking to his GOD he says, “In “thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right- “hand are pleasures for evermore (*l*).” And again; “As for me, I shall behold thy face in “righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake “with thy likeness (*m*).”

(*i*) 1 Cor. xlii. 10.(*k*) Jude 24.(*l*) Psal. xvi. 11.(*m*) Psal. xvii. 15.



An HYMN, suited to the
foregoing Sermon.

(As the CXLVIIIth PSALM.)

I.

THE wisdom from above
Descends in purest rays,
Sent from the GOD of love,
And shining to his praise:
Peace all serene,
And heav'nly bright,
With sweetest light,
Adorns the scene.

II.

Gentle, and free from strife
Celestial wisdom smiles;
And the soft stream of life
Nor ruffles nor defiles:
Tho' stung with pain
She wrongs receives,
She soon forgives,
And loves again.

III. Mercy

III.

Mercy to throbbing grief
Inspires her tender heart :
She longs to give relief,
And flies to pluck the dart :
Not flatt'ring phrase,
But fruits of love,
Her pity prove
In noblest praise.

IV.

As o'er the earthly ball
The beams of heav'n descend,
Impartially to all
Her blessings wide extend :
Her gen'rous care
Her friends supplies,
And enemies
Her bounties share.

V.

No maze, no mask she knows,
But, like an angel kind,
Each speech, each action shows
Simplicity of mind :

A pro-

A promise past
 She well performs,
 Tho' furious storms
 Oppose their blast.

VI.

This wisdom, LORD, impart :
 Where'er her beauties shine,
 She dignifies the heart
 With lineaments divine :
 She sheds abroad
 O'er life her beams,
 And gilds with gleams
 Death's gloomy road.

VII.

The valley past she springs
 Aloft, and sings, and soars,
 And on triumphant wings
 Her native seats explores :
 These seats she gains,
 And near the throne
 In bliss unknown
 For ever reigns.

28 SEGO

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